

A CANINE-CENTRIC CRITIQUE OF SELECTED DOG
NARRATIVES

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Abstract

In this thesis I perform a canine-centric reading, within the theoretical frame of Critical Animal Studies, of nine ‘dog narratives’ from the last three decades – that is, novels in which dogs and human-canine relationships are central to the story. While the novels differ from each other in numerous and substantial ways, they share a common trait: a conduciveness to the examination of tensions, paradoxes and contradictions inherent to the human-canine bond as it exists in Western culture. Each chapter centres on a key motif present in various groupings of four of the selected novels: human and canine interspecies communication; the socio-cultural categorisation of dogs; and the dual role of the domesticated dog as a device in life and literature. Just as Western cultural attitudes, overt and implicit, arise in these dog narratives in turn, these dog narratives provide valuable insight into our contradictory perceptions and subsequent treatment of dogs bred to serve as companions. Dog narratives present us with an opportunity to examine and critique some of the assumptions made about dogs – assumptions that result in their paradoxical status in Western culture. While some dog narratives reinforce the belief that human language privileges the human species, others undermine this claim by privileging canine forms of language and through depicting human language as problematic or as overrated as a means of communication. Authors of dog narratives utilise conflict stemming from opposing views of dogs’ subject/object categorisation in Western culture to challenge the deleterious object status of dogs. Most, if not all, dogs depicted in dog narratives are devices to facilitate the conveyance of stories primarily concerned with human experiences; nevertheless, authors of dog narratives can and do find efficient ways to challenge and question reductive representations of dogs. By utilising techniques such as point of view, characterisation and the itinerancy trope, and by creatively and effectively imagining their way into the canine mind, many authors of dog

narratives bestow a canine identity upon the dogs they depict, which challenges our ability to view and treat dogs with detached objectivity and, in doing so, they offer more positive representations of the literary canine companion.

Introduction

Genetic evidence suggests *Canis familiaris* (the domesticated dog) became distinct from *Canis lupus* (wolves) as early as 500,000 BC, while archaeological evidence of dogs living alongside humans dates back to 12,000 BC (McHugh 200). Hence, dogs have lived alongside humans for (at the very least) fourteen thousand years, and consequently they feature prolifically in Western cultural narratives such as visual art, books and film. As Susan McHugh observes, “Dogs seem unthinkable outside the context of human culture and, what is more, culture as we know it has been inseparable from their presence” (19-20). From Homer’s early depiction of Odysseus’ loyal and faithful canine companion Argos in *The Odyssey* (800 B.C.E.) through to Eric Knight’s classic novel *Lassie Come-Home* (1938), and the abundance of fictional narratives focussing on canine characters that have emerged in the early twenty-first century, authors have utilised the character and charisma of domesticated dogs to embellish stories about human beings. They are, as Erica Fudge writes, “the most storied of all pet animals” (10).

Novels that feature one dog or incorporate a few dogs as central characters could be said to belong a sub-genre of fiction that Laura Brown calls the “Dog Narrative” (113). There are many famous dog narratives, such as Jack London’s 1903 *The Call of the Wild*, which is a story about a sled dog named Buck; Richard Adams’ 2006 *The Plague Dogs*, the tale of two escaped ‘laboratory dogs’, and Jon Katz’s 2011 *Rose in a Storm: A Novel*, which is about the tribulations of a loyal working farm dog. These works share a number of key traits; primarily, a canine character is central to the narrative and, secondly, the dogs are depicted as having a ‘role’: as sled dog, lab animal and herder, respectively. Of course, one other role that the majority of dogs in a Western cultural context perform in life (and literature) is that of the ‘pet’. The term ‘pet’, while still widely used, is considered by some to be “demeaning”

(Herzog 74) and typically associated with a period in which dogs were kept as ‘playthings’, ‘lapdogs’, and status symbols; since the late twentieth century, therefore, the term ‘companion animal’ has become more popular in certain discourses as it is thought to represent the human-canine relationship in a less trivial, more egalitarian manner (Irvine 57-8).

In addition to the roles dogs perform literally and in literature, they often fulfil a more practical purpose in novels. Authors of dog narratives often utilise canine characters to examine some aspect of human experience: that is, dogs are useful as devices to explore or provide insight into human lives. The usefulness of the canine character as a literary device can be observed in Fred Gipson’s 1956 illustrated novel *Old Yeller*. In the story, young Travis Coates learns about judgement and acceptance, loving others, loss and sacrifice as a direct result of a stray dog entering his life. Another example is Stephen King’s 1981 novel *Cujo*, in which a rabid St Bernard becomes the metaphoric vehicle for delivering a dire warning about the consequences of marital infidelity (Williams; Scholtmeijer). A more recent example is found in Michelle de Kretser’s 2007 novel *The Lost Dog* in which character Tom Loxley struggles to deal with his mother’s aging and his lack of human connection through the lens of searching for his lost dog. In each of these novels, the canine character – Old Yeller, Cujo and Tom Loxley’s dog, whose name is not revealed in the novel – acts as a device. These dogs are supplementary to the human protagonist and his or her journey.

While Western dog narratives more often than not focus on the human experience in favour of exploring the experiences of being a dog, they also, inevitably, provide insight into how humans relate to dogs. Over the last few decades, a growing body of scholars, including many from within the academic field of Critical Animal Studies, have critiqued representations of nonhuman animals in fiction to gain insight into how these depictions

reflect societal attitudes about nonhuman animals, and to ascertain what literary depictions of animals might reveal about the animals themselves. Sociologist Nik Taylor explains that those who choose a Critical Animal Studies theoretical approach to examining animal depictions in literature seek to go beyond the use of animals “simply as analytical tools”, and she argues that there is a way to read these texts so that “embodied animals [remain] at the forefront” of the analysis (158). Marion Copeland explains that the task of animal-centric criticism is to “examine works of literature from the point of view of how animals are treated therein, looking to reconstruct the standpoint of the animals in question” (359). The nine primary novels selected for analysis in this thesis will be examined by adopting a Critical Animal Studies theoretical perspective because this will enable a canine-centric critique, meaning that the canine characters will always remain at the forefront of the analysis. Reading the novels in this way exposes some of the explicit and implicit assumptions that humans make about dogs and reveals the many paradoxes associated with Western society’s treatment of the ubiquitous canine companion.

The novels featured in this thesis are Dean Koontz’s *Watchers* (1987); Jack Ketchum’s *Red* (1995); Paul Auster’s *Timbuktu* (1999); Carolyn Parkhurst’s *The Dogs of Babel* (2003); Dan Rhodes’ *Timoleon Vieta Come Home: A Sentimental Journey* (2003); Gerard Donovan’s *Julius Winsome* (2006); Garth Stein’s *The Art of Racing in the Rain* (2008); Nancy Kress’ *Dogs* (2008) and David Wroblewski’s *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* (2008). Each of the three chapters deals with four of the nine novels in various combinations, and each chapter centres on a key motif: ‘The Problem of Language’, ‘Dogs as Objects or Subjects-of-a-Life’ and ‘The Canine Companion as a Dual Device’. By adopting a canine-centric perspective – to the extent that is humanly possible – my critique of these dog narratives provides insight into the paradoxical ways dogs are positioned and perceived in Western culture.

The relationship between the lives of dogs in Western societies and Western literary depictions of dogs is an important one. As Philip Armstrong points out, “Literary texts testify to the shared emotions, moods and thoughts of people in specific historical moments and places, as they are influenced by – and as they influence – the surrounding socio-cultural forces and systems” (*What Animals Mean* 4). Just as societal attitudes common to a certain time period arise in literature, literature can in turn influence the thoughts and moods of a particular population at a specific period in time. One might expect, therefore, the ways in which dogs are regarded in various Western societies at various points in history to be identifiable in examples of fiction from those contexts, and accordingly, the ways in which dogs are represented in fiction should in many ways reflect how they are perceived and treated in the societal milieu relevant to those fictions.

Adopting an animal-centric perspective can be fraught for the novelist as well as the critic because the nonhuman mind cannot ever truly be known by a human. Yet, Margo DeMello states that “what is important about literary representations of animal minds isn’t whether or not they’re accurate; it’s what they reveal about how humans think about animals, and what the consequences of that thinking is” (10). In her statement, DeMello places emphasis on the ways in which literary depictions can reflect, perpetuate and challenge ideas about nonhuman animals and the consequences of the ideas generated. Accordingly, this thesis is concerned with what depictions of dogs in Western dog narratives can reveal about humanity’s perceptions of dogs and explains how this relates to the consequent treatment of humankind’s so-called ‘best friend’.

Chapter One begins with a brief overview of how humans have come to view themselves as superior to other animals through a combination of Western theological, philosophical and scientific beliefs. I critique four novels to explore how the perceived ‘lack’

of language is used to disenfranchise dogs. I argue that while some novels reinforce the belief that human language privileges the human species, some dog narratives undermine this claim by valorising canine forms of language and through depicting human language as overrated as a means of communication. The outcome of these polarised viewpoints can mean the difference between dogs' being appreciated for their uniqueness or their being devalued when the perceived lack is used as justification.

In Chapter Two I investigate four novels that reflect either socio-cultural anxieties relating to the link between animal cruelty and domestic violence, the relationship between animal cruelty and hunting practices, biological engineering and domestic dog attacks. As a result of these authors' exploration of such anxieties, tension over whether domesticated dogs should be categorised as property or persons arises. Conflict stems from dogs' legal classification as property or objects on one hand, and their positioning as cherished, valued members of human families on the other hand. Authors of dog narratives can utilise this conflict to raise questions about dogs' place in Western culture and problematise the object status of dogs.

In Chapter Three, I analyse depictions of the literary canine companion and his or her role as a dual device. Dogs often function as narrative tools to assist with the telling of a human story. Furthermore, dogs in dog narratives are often depicted as providing companionship to a socially isolated human being, making the canine character a surrogate. A canine-centric reading can identify instances where a dog serves as a device and determine when such depictions constitute mere instrumentalisation; however, many authors of dog narratives resist reductive instrumentalisation of canine characters by extending subjectivity to canine protagonists. While arguably most, if not all, dogs in novels are devices in some

capacity, employed to help convey stories more concerned with human experiences, authors can and do find ways to subvert reductive representations of the literary canine companion.

In reference to her cultural exploration of the human-canine bond (published as *Dog Love*) Marjorie Garber states that she seeks to answer the question: “What does the [literary] emphasis on animals tell us about *people*” (“Reflection” 74 original emphasis). While this is an important and engaging question, my aim is the converse; that is, I wish to explore the following questions: What does the literary emphasis on animals tell us about *animals* and, in addition, what does the literary emphasis on animals tell us about people’s perceptions and treatment of animals, or more specifically, dogs.

Chapter One

The Problem of Language

The domesticated dog is an apt species to examine in literary representations because it is a species that humans simultaneously accept and reject; dogs are familiar, and yet unfamiliar to us. Dogs, writes Karla Armbruster, “are seen as existing on the boundary between nature and culture – and of all the domestic animals, they are most often seen as the closest to human beings and culture” (353). They adapt well to living with humans and are easily anthropomorphised because they display behaviours and express emotions associated with humanness, such as joy, sadness, affection and love. They are the animals “considered to be most humanlike” in Western culture (Taylor 66). Nevertheless, as nonhumans, they remain ‘other’ and despite their privileged status, dogs remain subjugated along with all other nonhuman animal species. One of the main factors in this subjugation is language: in particular, the claim that since dogs cannot speak, they are therefore deficient in comparison with humans.

In discussing dominant anthropocentric attitudes, cultural theorist John Berger states that despite the usefulness of the various domesticated animal species, it is the animal’s “lack of common language, its silence [that] guarantees its distance, its distinctness, its exclusion, from and of man” (4). Certainly, there are many justifications put forward for the disenfranchisement of nonhuman animals in Western culture but reasons related to language are one of the most common. Yet not everyone agrees. Stanley Coren, psychologist and author of *How to Speak Dog: Mastering the Art of Dog-Human Communication* (2000) is one of many scholars who reject the proposition that human language is essential for human-canine interspecies communication; rather than devalue dogs for their inability to form words he places the onus on humans to learn the language of dogs (11). Coren believes that dogs

have a unique vocabulary in addition to being able to participate in some aspects of human language; he believes effective interspecies communication is possible if humans can meet dogs halfway. If Coren is correct, then only by doing so will we realise, as Orhan Pamuk writes, that “[d]ogs do speak, but only to those who know how to listen” (11).

In this chapter, I focus on Dean Koontz’s *Watchers* (1987); Garth Stein’s *The Art of Racing in the Rain* (2008); Carolyn Parkhurst’s *The Dogs of Babel* (2003) and David Wroblewski’s *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* (2008) to illustrate how these dog narratives approach the topic of language and its effect on interspecies communication. I argue that Koontz reinforces notions of human exceptionalism by privileging human language and undervaluing dogs’ unique mode of speech and communication, and by implying that ‘ordinary’ dogs are dumb. Stein, on the other hand, effectively imagines his way into the canine mind and his canine protagonist’s point of view often disrupts and challenges complacency about human superiority; however, his narrative also ultimately reinforces anthropocentric assumptions. Critique of the novels by Parkhurst and Wroblewski shows how authors of dog narratives can effectively challenge the assumption that dogs are deficient communicators simply because they lack the capacity for human speech.

The term ‘language’ typically refers to the spoken and written forms of communication used by human beings to communicate amongst ourselves. Humans also use non-verbal forms of communication such as gestures to communicate but our physiology and brain capacity means that we tend to claim the status as the only animal to use language. In the nineteenth century, American author and abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe argued (in an article she entitled “The Rights of Dumb Animals” published in an 1869 edition of the magazine *Our Dumb Animals*) that because nonhuman animals could not speak or write and had no hope of being taught these skills, they were not part of the linguistic community

(Pearson 93-4).¹ However, her position drew criticism from an anonymous reader who rejected Stowe's claim that nonhuman animals were dumb. The reader asks, "Is there no language but that made up of vowels and consonants, and uttered by vocal organs?" (Pearson 92). The fact that the standard definition of language is so narrow and excludes nonverbal and non-written forms of communication – and in the process excludes all animals except for humans from the pool of language users – is as problematic for me as it was for Stowe's anonymous reader over a century ago. Nonhuman animals, or more specifically dogs, do participate in communication involving human language, evident in their ability to respond to verbal commands. In addition, they use barks, whines and growls along with tail, ear and eye signals that constitute a species-specific "system of communication" of their own (Fudge 52-3). Accordingly, unless prefaced with the word 'human', the term 'language' in this chapter refers to non-species-specific forms of communication: spoken, written and nonverbal alike.

Dean Koontz's novel *Watchers* reproduces many prejudices that modern Western culture harbours towards 'ordinary' nonhuman animals because they cannot produce human language. The story follows Travis Cornell, a 36 year old ex-Delta Force member who encounters '33-9' – a dog so named because of an identification tattooed in his ear. The dog is considered to be more intelligent than the 'average' dog because, while he does not speak words, he has been genetically engineered to produce human language. When Travis finds the retriever in the forest he is unaware that the dog has escaped from Banodyne Laboratories where he is the focus of the Francis Project, named after Saint Francis of Assisi who according to some traditions was able to speak to, and be understood by, nonhuman animals.

¹ By contrast, toward the end of the nineteenth century, H. G Wells, author of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), certainly believed that, as reflected in simian language acquisition research, humans were not the only animal species to communicate using language (McLean 43).

The Project is explained in the novel as aiming to make “human-animal communication possible” (Koontz 278). Koontz writes:

The idea was to apply the very latest knowledge in genetic engineering to the creation of animals with a much higher order of intelligence, animals capable of nearly human-level of thought, animals with whom we might be able to communicate. (278)

Key assumptions about nonhuman animals, language and communication are revealed through the project’s aim. There is no indication that these attitudes are being presented at all ironically; instead, Koontz unproblematically stereotypes ‘ordinary’ dogs as being ‘dumb’ by comparing them to Einstein and by implying that humans do not already communicate with ‘ordinary’ dogs. Through privileging the genetically engineered dog, Koontz diminishes the capacities of ‘average’ dogs to participate successfully in communication with human beings and casts them as being something more like Descartes’ sixteenth century ‘automata’.

Sometimes regarded as the “father of modern philosophy” (Bracken 1), philosopher and mathematician René Descartes was, and in many ways remains, a powerful figure in Western culture. Descartes’ work relating to rationalism, which valorises the human mind as the source of all knowledge, his views on the soul, and his concept of the mind-body dualism, have been widely influential. While the traditional concept of the mind/body split predates Descartes, he reinforced it by describing it in terms of rationalism (Taylor 142). In regards to the impact that Cartesian doctrines have had on nonhuman animals, it is arguably Descartes’ automata theory, which casts nonhuman animals as ‘simple machines’ incapable of rational thought that has had long-lasting and detrimental impact. This, coupled with his affirmation of the Christian belief that souls are specific to humans and thus denied to nonhuman animals, made Descartes an authority on the ways Western society perceives, values and treats nonhuman animals.

Before and after Descartes' era, the opinion that nonhuman animals are 'dumb' because they cannot speak or write words, and links between speechlessness and stupidity, were common. One way in which this prejudice manifests relates to the hearing impaired. In "Speaking Bodies, Speaking Minds: Animals, Language and History", Susan Pearson states: "[T]he deaf were the original 'dumb' creatures" (100) – that is, at least until the early nineteenth-century when debates between deaf educators saw factions divided between those called oralists, who privileged verbal language, and those called manualists, who promoted sign language as the superior method for teaching the deaf to communicate (101). In many ways, the debates between those who privilege the spoken word and those who privilege gesture as means to communicate are relevant to the conceptualisation of the human-nonhuman animal divide. This is because the associations of spoken and gestural forms of language are also linked with ideas about nature and culture.

Debates over whether spoken or gestural forms of communication are superior are well-established and ongoing. The belief that gestures as a form of expression are inferior or less sophisticated than spoken or written language has largely to do with the assumed connection between the former with nature, and the latter with culture. In discussing American attitudes in the nineteenth-century, Pearson explains:

[T]he difference between expression and language was the difference between the natural and the conventional. Expression was natural and corporeal – it was the facial expressions, the gestures, the grunts, and the groans the body gives forth. Language, on the other hand, was conventional and came not from nature or the body, but from the mind and human culture. (93)

Hence, the association of human language with culture also led to a belief that nonverbal forms of communications were more primitive or less sophisticated. This paradox between

nature and culture is another example of the ways authors reinforce the anthropocentrically driven concept of the mind/body split.

Issues relating to gesture and spoken forms of communication can be observed at play in Koontz's novel. In the beginning, when the human and canine protagonists first meet, Travis is unaware of the retriever's ability to produce human language. The dog cannot generate spoken words using his voice box but he can read and spell human words. Additionally, whereas real dogs have an impressive but limited vocabulary of words that they can understand, 33-9 understands almost every word that is spoken to him and fully comprehends their meaning in the context. However, until the dog can access props that enable him to spell out words, his presentation is that of a common domesticated dog. When 33-9 appears in the clearing, he is, unbeknown to Travis, being hunted by another escaped trans-genetic animal Koontz calls 'The Outsider'. Travis logically assumes that the scruffy anxious dog he finds in the forest is therefore an 'average', 'ordinary' dog.

Since no props are available for the dog to use to communicate using words, Travis, like the readers, are initially unaware of the dog's extraordinary linguistic abilities. Therefore, along with Travis, they must attempt to interpret the dog's gestures, vocalisations and general behaviour to determine his character and intention. The conversation begins with Travis asking the dog a series of rhetorical questions. "Surely you're not a wild dog – are you, boy?" The retriever chuffed... 'Not lost, are you?' It nuzzled his hand" ... 'Looks like you've had a difficult journey, boy.' The dog whined softly, as if agreeing with what Travis has said" (Koontz 8). Even though the dog's vocalisations and gestures occur immediately after each question or comment, Travis overlooks the chuff, hand nudge and whine, presuming them to be meaningless.

As Travis continues to misinterpret the dog's attempts to communicate using gestures and vocalisations the dog grows increasingly anxious. However, before leaving the clearing, the dog decides to warn Travis that he is in imminent danger. Koontz writes:

‘On your way now.’

[Travis]...gave the retriever a light slap on its side, rose, and stretched. The dog remained in front of him. He stepped past it,² heading for the narrow path that descended into darkness. The dog bolted around him and blocked the deer trail.

‘Move along, boy.’

The retriever bared its teeth and growled low in its throat. (8)

The retriever continues to block Travis' attempts to exit the clearing down the same path in which the threat approaches, by biting, growling, snapping and lunging. Travis is confused by the dog's behaviour, which alternates between seemingly friendly and aggressive. When the dog reverts from acting aggressively “to a friendly mood”, and licks Travis' hand, he calls the dog “schizophrenic” (11). This is clearly a reference to the reductive stereotype of those diagnosed as schizophrenics who are perceived to oscillate between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ behaviours making them seem irrational and erratic, passive some of the time and unpredictable and dangerous at other times. When Travis pauses to analyse the dog's behaviour, he finally recognises there is intention. Koontz writes:

The dog returned to the other end of the clearing. It stood with its back to him, staring down the deer trail...The muscles in its back and haunches were visibly tensed as if it were preparing to move fast.

‘What are you looking at?’

² It is important to note Koontz's use of the word ‘it’ in place of ‘the dog’ or ‘him’. Not using the pronoun to describe nonhuman animals is objectifying and also serves to reinforce the human-animal divide.

Travis was suddenly aware that the dog was not fascinated by the trail itself but, perhaps, by something on the trail. (11)

Once Travis heeds 33-9's gestures and vocalisations he is able to extract the meaning of the dog's behaviour. Fortunately, despite the earlier dismissal of the dog's behaviour as bizarre, erratic and meaningless, 33-9 is able to utilise vocalisations and gestures to provide Travis with enough forewarning to save his life.

Travis' suspicion that the dog is different is expressed through a comparison between 33-9 and 'ordinary' dogs and the comparison entails the assumption that dogs are typically dumb. The first example of this occurs in the car, after the pair escapes from *The Outsider* and Travis decides to take the retriever home with him. During the car ride, Travis speculates about the dog's origin. He senses something unusual about the animal. There is a certain look in the dog's eyes: "they seemed somehow more expressive than a dog's eyes usually were, more intelligent and aware" (Koontz 26). When Travis mentions the location of a peanut bar in the car, the dog promptly opens the glove compartment to remove it with his teeth. Travis takes this as evidence of extraordinary canine intelligence but in reality, of course, this is well within the capability of actual dogs. Their powerful sense of smell sees them used in numerous human service roles such as detecting cadavers, illegal drugs, unexploded landmines and biological hazards for customs and quarantine. Indeed, dogs' incredible olfactory capacities enable them to detect cancer in the human body (Willis et al). In communication between dogs, the canine capacity for scent is crucial (Coren 184-5). Hence, any animal belonging to a species that can detect cadavers, illegal drugs, unexploded landmines, biological hazards and even cancer by scent would not have to be told there is a candy bar in the glove box right in front of his nose.

Travis' suspicion that the retriever is 'special' continues once he reaches home and his assumption that dogs are ordinarily dumb persists. After announcing his intention to bath the dog, Travis observes: "The retriever turned towards him and cocked its head and appeared to listen when he spoke. But it did not look like one of those smart dogs in the movies. It did not look as if it understood him. It just looked dumb" (Koontz 52). Then, when Travis briefly exits the room and returns to discover the dog has turned the water faucet on, he is, in this case justifiably, astonished (52). The sequence of events that leads Travis to consider 33-9 more intelligent than other dogs culminates when he announces his intention to give the dog a name. The retriever sits up attentively, as if in anticipation of his naming. Travis correctly interprets this response but then reconsiders:

God in heaven...I'm attributing human intentions to him. He's a mutt, special maybe but still only a mutt. He may look as if he's waiting to hear what he'll be called, but he sure as hell doesn't understand English. (56)

In all likelihood, although we cannot know for sure, it is beyond the capacity of dogs to interpret such a statement, although they are capable of various modes of complex thought. Nevertheless, this passage does reveal something about the way humans view dogs. Travis believes he is anthropomorphising 33-9, which means attributing to 33-9 human-specific behaviours, in this case, the ability to interpret and comprehend the meaning and context of information presented in words. To attribute the capacity for reason to the dog would, of course, conflict with Descartes' rationalism, which erroneously posits the ability to reason as a human-specific trait. Notably, research shows that many nonhuman animals have the capacity for reason and are self-aware, including primates (Byrne), parrots (Pepperberg), chimpanzees, dolphins, elephants and magpies (Broom). Nevertheless, Travis' reluctance to attribute the capacity for reason to the dog reflects the influence of social discourses that

construct dogs, as well as most other nonhuman animals, as inferior, simple, stupid and irrational.

Still unaware of the dog's ability to produce human language, but impressed by what he has seen thus far, Travis chooses to name the retriever 'Einstein', in reference to the man often considered to be the greatest intellectual figure in Western history. Einstein goes on to perform many tasks during his first night at Travis' house that in reality are called 'tricks', actions that could reasonably be expected of any dog with appropriate motivation or training. For example, he retrieves beer from the fridge. What transpires to differentiate Einstein from other dogs, in Travis' view, is that he seems to be self-aware, or possess consciousness: another trait long considered as being human-specific. Travis suspects that Einstein is using deception by pretending to be less intelligent than he actually is. Koontz writes:

Dogs – all animals, in fact – simply did not possess the high degree of self-awareness required to analyze themselves in comparison to others of their kind. Comparative analysis was strictly a human quality... To assume this dog was, in fact, aware of such things was to credit it not only with remarkable intelligence but with a capacity for reason and logic, and with a facility for rational judgement superior to the instinct that ruled the decisions of all other animals. (66)

In this passage, Descartes' famous rationalist proposition is implicitly invoked: "I think therefore I am" (Descartes 18-19). This dictum, advanced in the same treatise that goes on to deny 'mind' to nonhuman animals, is reflected in Travis' explanation of nonhuman animal consciousness because he is envisaging self-reflection and asserting that 'ordinary' dogs lack self-awareness. Thus, it is not so much the 'tricks' that Einstein performs that impresses Travis, but the idea that a nonhuman animal, in this case a domesticated dog, might share what is thought to be the human-specific capacity for reason and self-reflection.

Travis devotes considerable time to pondering how much an ‘average’ dog does or does not know, can or cannot comprehend in matters of language and communication. During the first evening at Travis’ home, he observes that Einstein shows an interest in his bookshelf and appears to intentionally withdraw selected books from the shelves. Travis, again, attempts to rationalise Einstein’s behaviour by drawing on what he thinks he knows about dogs:

Surely, [the dog] could not understand the synopses [Travis] provided. Yet it seemed to listen raptly as he spoke. He knew he must be misinterpreting essentially meaningless animal behaviour, attributing complex intentions to the dog when it had none. (Koontz 68)

This sequence in Koontz’s novel has the effect of denying real dogs – in contrast to the literate Einstein – the capacity for complex intentions. Of course, by all reasonable accounts, understanding the synopses of books is actually beyond the capability (and probably the interest) of actual dogs. At the same time, what is insinuated in this passage is that nonhuman animal behaviour must be meaningless if humans cannot understand it. Koontz also reminds the reader here that books are products of human culture: sophisticated and specialised medium crafted from human language; thus, if animals cannot produce human spoken language, then human written language is surely even further beyond their comprehension – an even more inaccessible territory of the human ‘mind’.

Before discovering Einstein’s scientific role as the “most important experimental animal in history” (Koontz 354), Travis assumes he has found a regular dog, and therefore a ‘dumb’ dog. Notably, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term ‘dumb’ is defined as “Applied to the lower animals (and, by extension, to inanimate nature) as naturally incapable of articulate speech” (“dumb”). This explains why it is so often automatically

associated with nonhuman animals as it combines the two meanings of ‘unintelligent’ and ‘incapable of speech’. Indeed the term ‘dumb’ features repeatedly in Koontz’s novel in reference to ‘average’ dogs. In one passage, Einstein is upset by an image of a demon in a magazine. Unaware that the image resembles *The Outsider*, and therefore terrifies Einstein, Travis cannot fathom why the dog takes the magazine and places it in the bin. Travis’ confusion is apparent when Koontz writes: “Sometimes Einstein exhibited uncanny intelligence, but sometimes he behaved like an ordinary dog, and these oscillations between canine genius and dopey mutt were enervating for anyone for anyone trying to understand how he could be so bright” (265). Suggesting any dog is just a ‘dopey mutt’ is clearly reductive, although in this context, the distinction is primarily being made to elevate Einstein’s supposedly superior intellectual status.

Koontz casts dogs as typically dumb when in order not to be exposed as extraordinary Einstein must pretend to be like normal dogs, which in Koontz’s novel means unintelligent. In one final example, Koontz explicitly links dogs with dumbness. Travis suspects that Einstein fears being recaptured and returned to Banodyne Laboratories where he lived unhappily in captivity. This leads Travis to form a hypothesis about Einstein’s inconsistent behaviour. He suggests the dog’s fear of being captured “is why he usually plays at being a dumb dog in public and reveals his intelligence only in private” (Koontz 304). ‘Playing dumb’ here involves Einstein concealing his linguistic abilities. In fact, the ability to deceive is another capacity often presented as evidence of a higher intelligence that distinguishes humans from other animal species (Searcy and Nowiki). And in reality, dogs routinely practise deception, particularly during the complex social activity of play (Irvine 152). As a result of Koontz’s approach, *Watchers* incorporates and introduces many of the basic assumptions about animality, humanity and language that novels such as *The Art of Racing in*

the Rain, *The Dogs of Babel* and *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* explore in much more complex ways.

Eventually, Einstein is able to articulate his thoughts in Koontz's novel with the assistance of a spelling device that Travis creates using Scrabble tiles placed in Lucite tubes. Articulating a dog's thoughts in fiction can be achieved through various means, one of which is using the conventions of first-person interior monologue to enable the reader to access the dog's thoughts, which are then ordered and expressed in human language. This is the approach taken by Garth Stein in *The Art of Racing in the Rain*. The canine protagonist, Enzo, an elderly mixed-breed, tells his life story on the eve of his euthanasia. Unlike Einstein, Enzo is a typical dog who does not speak or write in ways that constitute producing human language, but in the world of the story, his perspective allows for his thoughts and observations to be known to the reader. What a dog thinks or might say if granted the ability to use human language cannot ever be known; thus, Stein imagines what he thinks Enzo might say and assumes how he might feel. Of course, this form of nonhuman animal representation involving a kind of 'ventriloquism' constitutes radical anthropomorphism (Harel 49), and to this extent it is not an authentic representation of canine reality. However, as mentioned in my introduction (in accordance with Margo DeMello's point about reading narratives from an animal standpoint), it is not accuracy or authenticity that necessarily matters in regards to analysing animal representations but rather what a novel like Stein's can tell us about how humans perceive dogs, and the consequences of these perceptions.

Stein's story is primarily about a human-canine bond: the interspecies relationship between a human named Denny Swift and his canine companion. The narrative follows Enzo's life with Denny and then Denny's partner Eve, and their daughter, Zoe. The novel

opens with Enzo, old and incontinent, lying in a pool of urine while lamenting the limitations he perceives to impede his ability to communicate with humans. He says:

Gestures are all that I have; sometimes they must be grand in nature. And while I occasionally step over the line...it is what I must do in order to communicate clearly and effectively. In order to make my point understood without question. I have no words I can rely on because, much to my dismay, my tongue was designed long and flat and loose. (Stein 1)

Enzo believes his struggle to communicate with humans is owing to his vocabulary being limited to gestures. He claims that it takes great effort for him to communicate when limited to gestures because there is a high risk of misunderstandings. In talking of his long, flat loose tongue, Enzo finds his own condition lacking when it is the case that dogs' tongues are perfectly suited for canine needs. Indeed, dogs presumably find their tongues to be extremely valuable as the unique design enables them to lap water efficiently from bowls and release heat from their bodies via panting (Coren 70). Dogs also use their tongues to communicate in complex ways; the withdrawal or exposure of the tongue, and its shape and position in the mouth, are integral aspects of dogs' "gesture-based communication systems" providing visual cues to others regarding mood, such as "information about anger, dominance, aggression, fear, attention, interest or relaxation" (Coren 84-8). Yet in this passage, Enzo assumes all the responsibility for interspecies communication breakdown and blames misunderstandings on his own physical 'limitations' and his inability to form words.

Enzo's sadness and frustration as a result of his inability to speak words lead him to desire reincarnation as a man. His knowledge of matters relating to interspecies reincarnation derives from a television documentary he once watched. The documentary film that Enzo refers to in the novel relates to the 1998 documentary "State of Dogs", based on a Mongolian

legend, which Stein credits as his inspiration for *The Art of Racing in the Rain* (Stein “Garth Stein”). In the film, the spirit of canine protagonist Baasar – who is shot dead by a dog hunter at the outset – reflects on his life while transitioning from dog to human form via reincarnation. Baasar’s interactions with humans cause him to view them as untrustworthy and cruel, therefore undesirable to be; thus, he resists taking the human form. This marks a crucial point of difference between the desires of Baasar and Enzo. Enzo eagerly anticipates taking on the human form and proudly declares: “When I return to this world, I will be a man. I will walk among you. I will lick my lips with my small dextrous tongue. I will shake hands with other men, grasping firmly with my opposable thumbs. And I will teach people all that I know” (Stein 312). So while Baasar views reincarnation as a human unpleasant, Enzo views it as a kind of promotion. He states this explicitly when he lists all the ‘superior’ body parts he will acquire through his transformation.

Reincarnation, or transmigration as it is sometimes called, is a concept of many Eastern religions but there is no concept of reincarnation in the ubiquitous Western Judeo-Christian religion. Within some of the Eastern religious traditions, humans can be reincarnated on Earth as another species of animal and it is not thought impossible for a nonhuman animal to return to Earth as a human being. The ascension to a ‘higher’ life form echoes the teachings of influential Greek philosopher Aristotle. Born in 384 BC, Aristotle had a substantial impact on Western cultural attitudes regarding the social and moral status of nonhuman animals. He devised the *Scala Naturae*, or The Great Chain of Being, which is a scale that ranks animals and plants according to their apparent intellectual aptitude. On the scale, human beings are situated at the pinnacle above other mammals, below which in descending order come birds, reptiles, fish, insects, and so forth, concluding with inanimate matter at the base. Thus, in contrast to Baasar in “State of Dogs”, Enzo’s desire to end his life as a dog and reincarnate as a human aligns more with dominant Western anthropocentric

standpoints through the suggestion that there is a system of promotion and demotion at play in matters of interspecies reincarnation.

Enzo venerates the soul and values his sense of inner-humanness over his canine exterior. He states, “I’m stuffed into a dog’s body, but that’s just the shell. It’s what’s inside that’s important. The soul. And my soul is very human” (Stein 3). The soul is a pivotal feature of Judeo-Christian doctrine – and remained an important feature of Descartes’ philosophy – and is usually understood to be a gift from God that *only* humans possess. Once the soul exits the body, it transits to either Heaven or Hell for all eternity.³ The soul’s destination is determined by how an individual lives his or her life: Heaven is a reward and Hell is a punishment. In Christianity the human soul does not transmigrate because reincarnation is not a concept adopted by this religion. Reincarnation would not apply to nonhuman animals anyhow since according to orthodox Christianity, and Descartes, they do not possess souls.⁴ Christian and Cartesian doctrines support the assumption that nonhuman animals are physically and spiritually less significant than human beings, which reflects Enzo’s beliefs about himself in Stein’s novel. Like Descartes, Enzo believes that the soul and the ability to produce speech is what makes the human animal exceptional (along with the opposable thumb). Thus the Christian belief in the ‘exclusive’ human soul posited alongside Cartesian doctrine and echoes of Aristotelian hierarchy all contribute to the idea that it is better to be a human than a dog: in Stein’s novel, ironically, this anthropocentric assumption is made even more difficult to dispute because it is a dog himself who declares it.

On the one hand, Enzo’s expressions of inadequacy might lend verisimilitude to his claim of inferiority; however, his self-deprecation can also be read as structural irony. This is because Enzo can be considered a naïve and unreliable as a narrator. Consider the opening

³ However, the Roman Catholic tradition allows for an interim period in Purgatory to do penance for sins.

⁴ Although nowadays, an increasing number of non-mainstream theologians and Christians do believe that nonhuman animals do in fact have souls (Camosy 76).

passage in which Denny arrives home to find Enzo lying in urine and apologises to him for being delayed and arriving home late. Enzo responds to this by thinking:

I realize that he thinks my accident was because he was late. Oh, no. That's not how it was meant. It's so hard to communicate because there are so many moving parts.

There's presentation and there's interpretation and they're so dependent on each other it makes things very difficult. I didn't want him to feel bad about this. (Stein 5)

Enzo's concern that his inability to speak words will leave Denny feeling guilty about the indoor urination lacks logic because Denny, and presumably the reader, recognises that incontinence is involuntary and therefore uncontrollable. The reader knows that there is no theory under which an aged and incontinent dog locked alone inside a house could reasonably be expected to make it outdoors to urinate, which is an insight that Enzo lacks but that Denny and the reader share. The reader, therefore, is encouraged to respond emotionally and empathetically to Enzo's desire to do the 'right' thing despite being physically incapable.

Another incident that exposes Enzo's naïveté occurs when Denny's partner, Eve, leans down near the dog's muzzle to place a food bowl on the floor. Enzo explains: "I had detected a bad odour, like rotting wood, mushrooms, decay. Wet, soggy, decay. It came from her ears and sinuses. There was something in Eve's head that didn't belong" (Stein 36). Despite having identified Eve's undiagnosed brain tumour with his remarkable sense of smell, Enzo feels that his early detection is pointless if he cannot tell of his discovery. In Enzo's view, the fact that he cannot tell Eve her life is in danger means, as 'the family's protector', he has failed. Once again, he laments his perceived physical limitations, saying, "Given a facile tongue, I could have warned them. I could have alerted them to her condition long before they discovered it with their machines, their computers and super-vision scopes that can see inside the human head" (36). Irony once again transpires as a result of Enzo's

sense of inadequacy because he overlooks the incredible skills he possesses that enables him to detect the cancer long before humanity's sophisticated and expensive machines. Readers are reminded of dogs' powerful and acute sense of smell, which in reality can and does detect cancer in the human body.

Stein's characterisation of Enzo as a naïve narrator continues when the dog is accidentally abandoned. The progression of Eve's tumour causes her symptoms including nausea, pain and debilitating headaches and, with Denny away in France, she leaves the house with her daughter, Zoe, to stay with her parents. Since she forgets to take Enzo, he is left locked in the house alone for three days during which time he survives by drinking from the toilet bowl. However, when his hunger becomes unbearable on the second night, he claims to suffer hallucinations involving a stuffed zebra toy belonging to Zoe. Enzo describes watching the zebra come to life, abuse and humiliate the other stuffed toys in Zoe's bedroom, then, he says, "I could take no more and I moved in, teeth bared for attack..." (Stein 53). But before he can attack the toy, he claims the zebra rips open its own stitching and pulls the stuffing out. When Denny returns home the following day, he is initially furious at Eve for leaving Enzo alone. However, his anger shifts to Enzo with the discovery of the destroyed toys in Zoe's bedroom. Enzo explains that Denny, consumed with rage, "reared up and roared, and with his great hand, he struck me on the side of the head. I toppled over with a yelp, hunkering as close to the ground as possible. 'Bad dog!' he bellowed and he raised his hand to hit me again" (57). Denny never gets to hear about Enzo's experience with the 'depraved zebra'; meanwhile, readers recognise that the zebra story is fabricated to counteract the shame Enzo feels about his 'bad' behaviour. Readers also recognise that Enzo is a victim here, in the first instance, as a result of being left alone without food, water or company for three days and secondly because he is then corporally punished for venting his frustrations in a way many dogs would, and do, in a similar situation. Stein's use of structural

irony, via the naïve narrator, enables him to deliver insights to the reader by way of using complex point of view, narrative structure and by complicating ideas about human/animal distinctions based on assumptions about human uniqueness and language.

Clearly, we are meant to see that it is humans, not dogs, who are limited in their understanding in Stein's novel. Stein reflects the social reality whereby dogs who do not behave in a manner consistent with humans' expectations are widely pathologised as being 'bad', 'dysfunctional' or 'destructive'. Two useful literary examples of this are memoirs about dogs: John Grogan's *Marley & Me: Life and Love with the World's Worst Dog* (2005) and *Milk Teeth: A Memoir of a Woman and Her Dog* by Robbie Pfeufer Kahn (2008). Like Stein's fictional Enzo, whom Denny explicitly calls a bad dog, the central canines in these non-fiction dog narratives are corporeally punished when normal canine behaviours are pathologised as being 'bad'. Unlike Grogan's 'perfect' childhood dog, Shaun, whom he recalls never stole food, was easily trained, obeyed all commands, returned when called, never broke or destroyed objects and sat quietly in the car, Marley, a golden Labrador, pulls on his lead, chews on foreign objects, barges into people, defecates in the ocean, chews door frames and resists training. He is castrated in order to diminish his energetic disposition, but to no avail. After John and his wife Jenny begin a family and their second child is born, Jenny grows intolerant of Marley's behaviour. With a toddler and a new born to care for Jenny's postpartum stress worsens and Marley's 'bad' behaviour becomes a target of her frustration. John recounts arriving home on one occasion to find Jenny "beating Marley with her fists...crying uncontrollably and flailing wildly at him, more like she was pounding a kettledrum than imposing a beating, landing glancing blows on his back and shoulders and neck" (Grogan 162). Jenny demands that Marley be re-homed but reconsiders after a period of time.

Another rambunctious Labrador features in a journal-style memoir penned by sociologist Robbie Pfeufer Khan. It is immediately clear that Khan has an idealised expectation of how her dog Laska should behave and how their relationship together should be; but Laska seems determined to undermine that expectation at every turn. Laska can do little right as she eats cat faeces, defecates indoors, misses the newspaper when defecating indoors, issues bites instead of gentle licks, licks Khan after eating faeces, nips at Khan's heels, chews on shoes, jumps up and tears stockings, dislikes sitting still to be petted and bites and snarls when roughly handled or struck on the head. When Khan seeks 'professional' help from Laska's breeder, she is told that she should stop Laska jumping up using "an approach based on the old-fashioned style of correction" which, Khan explains, involves waiting for Laska to jump and then "punch[ing] her on top of the head or kick[ing] her in the chest with my knee" (126). Khan's frustration at Laska's 'bad' behaviour and 'disrespect for authority' leads her to conclude that her puppy has a genetic predisposition for disobedience. Khan's initial issues with Laska clearly stem from her ignorance of dog behaviour and lack of understanding that dogs are not human and do not instinctively know what humans expect of them. In most of Khan's examples, Laska appears to be using bites and jumping to seek attention, while chewing interesting objects and eating faeces are typical behaviours for most dogs. Like the factual experiences of Marley and Laska, recounted by their frustrated, and at times intolerant and abusive guardians, in Stein's novel, Enzo is punished by his human guardian who displays frustration and intolerance at the dog's behaviour. In *Marley and Me*, *Milk Teeth* and *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, normal dog behaviour is labelled 'bad' and incites physical violence. From the canine-centric perspective enabled by Stein's 'ventriloquism' of Enzo's naïve point of view, however, it becomes clear that in each of these cases, the dogs are not bad but rather these miscommunications stem from humans' insufficient expertise in interpreting 'doglish' – a term used here to refer to the language of

dogs, and lack of insight into the nature and experience of ‘dogdom’, meaning the experience and condition of being a dog.

While Denny and Enzo’s relationship is at times marred by misunderstandings, for the most part the two have a strong and untroubled relationship. An example of this can be seen in the passage when after being struck, Enzo cautiously approaches Denny who apologises for hitting Enzo. In response, the dog places his head on Denny’s lap and gazes upwards. Denny says, “Sometimes I think you actually understand me” (Stein 61). This is another example of structural irony, only on this occasion the naïveté is Denny’s. Enzo and the readers know that this particular dog indeed understands Denny since Enzo confirms this at the outset when he says, “I might not be able to form words, but I understand them” (7). Denny may think that Enzo cannot comprehend him but he still talks to him. When Denny speaks out loud, Stein has Enzo reply in gestures (or for the reader’s benefit, in thoughts). The proficiency of this kind of non-verbal interspecies communication is demonstrated in the passage when Denny helps Enzo up and gently guides the dog until he can stand unassisted. To this, Enzo says, “To show him [that I can stand], I rub my muzzle against his thigh” (7). This representation of non-verbal interspecies interaction will resonate with many, if not most dog ‘owners’, who will have observed similarly subtle gestures being used by dogs as a means to communicate with the humans in their lives.

Human-canine communication occurs most successfully without words at another point in Stein’s novel involving an interaction between Enzo and Zoe, who is pre-lingual. Having destroyed Zoe’s toys, and being smacked for it, Enzo explains the intricacies of his relationship with the toddler, saying, “she trusted me but was afraid when I made faces at her that were too expressive and defied what she’d learned from the adult-driven World Order that denies animals the process of thought” (Stein 58). While he may not know the specifics

of the teachings of the 'adult-driven World Order', Enzo is referring to the way in which Western religion, philosophy and science have combined over many thousands of years to influence the way in which humans view themselves as intelligent and exceptional, and other animals as stupid and subsidiary. Enzo knows that humans deny him the capacity to understand their world and seems aware that children raised in anthropocentric culture are indoctrinated into believing nonhuman animals are 'dumb'. This assumption is challenged in the novel, however, when by way of offering an apology for tearing up her toys, Enzo crawls forward on his elbows and positions his muzzle aside Zoe's leg. He explains, "She waited a long time to give me her answer, but she finally gave it. She placed her hand on my head and let it rest there...she did touch me, which meant she forgave me for what happened" (58). In this instance Enzo's request for forgiveness and Zoe's answer are unspoken. Human language is redundant as gestures powerfully and proficiently communicate the characters' emotions. This more immediate and mutual communication is, perhaps, only made possible because as a child, Zoe is not yet fully integrated into the adult-driven World Order of human language.

The complex intimate exchange that takes place between Zoe and Enzo demonstrates that a dog's life is not simple or insignificant because of his lack of capacity to produce spoken words. While Enzo wants to escape from his dog body and inhabit the human form, he is still depicted as a sensitive social being whose experience of being a dog is in various ways rich and rewarding. It is significant that after a lifetime of dreaming about reincarnation as a man, as he lies dying in Denny's arms it is not the human world that Enzo's mind wanders to but the "rolling hills covered with the golden grasses" of his birth town (Stein 315). He suddenly realises that this could be his last chance to embrace the experience of being a dog, and he asks rhetorically, "Have I squandered my dogness? Have I forsaken my nature for my desires? Have I made a mistake by anticipating my future and shunning my present?" (315). However, Enzo's recognition that being a dog is just as valuable as being a

human being, while pleasing, is short-lived and, as a result, Stein's novel concludes in a manner more consistent with dominant anthropocentric Western ideologies. Enzo achieves his life-long dream of being reincarnated as a human being and of speaking directly with Denny and in the process his regrets over squandering his dogness are promptly forgotten. The novel closes many years after Enzo's death when Denny is introduced to a young speed car racing fan. When the boy reveals his name is Enzo, Denny is struck by a sense of familiarity. The long-running 'problematic' language barrier as expressed by Enzo the narrator throughout the novel is finally overcome as the reader suspects that the human Enzo is the canine Enzo reincarnated. To this end, the reader is left believing Enzo and Denny are reunited and, even better, they are able to communicate effortlessly as both are now human. This idea is further reinforced by the fact that the boy is speaking Italian, which Denny just happens to understand. This ending ultimately devalues the experience of dogdom and despite the many ways that Stein challenges anthropocentric assumptions of human superiority based on language, *The Art of Racing in the Rain* reinforces in the end the idea that being a dog is an inferior experience to being a human.

Until he is reincarnated as a human and acquires a human voice, Enzo feels stymied by his inability to produce human language and thinks that given the appropriate 'equipment', he could break down the perceived communication barrier between himself and the humans in his life. Reincarnation as a human being is a convenient device for novelists to give a dog the capacity to breach the species barrier, produce and comprehend human language (Lord Dunsany's 1936 novel *My Talks with Dean Spanley* is one example) but the mechanism for creating talking dogs in Carolyn Parkhurst's novel *The Dogs of Babel* is the spiritual's arch-enemy, science. Like the scientists of Banodyne Laboratory in Koontz's *Watchers*, Parkhurst's protagonist, linguistics professor Paul Iverson, desires to have a dog produce human language. Paul sets about teaching his Rhodesian ridgeback, Lorelei, to speak using

words after his wife Lexy commits suicide and Lorelei is the only witness. Paul hopes that Lorelei will provide him her eyewitness testimony. Unlike Koontz, but more consistently than Stein, Parkhurst challenges notions of human exceptionalism and does not privilege human language; rather, she portrays human language as being profoundly flawed. In doing so, she exposes the unreasonable expectations that humans pose on dogs kept as companion animals in regards to the ways in which they are expected to communicate.

In a manner reminiscent of Enzo's lament in *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, in Parkhurst's novel, once again the tongue is considered a failure if it cannot produce words. But here, it is a human tongue at fault. Paul's problems with language began the moment he was born: "I became a linguist in part because words have failed me all my life. I was born tongue-tied in the most literal sense...I was born with a tongue not meant for speaking" (Parkhurst 38). Fortunately for Paul, his tongue-tie is easily remedied with minor surgery; however, it is the psychological barriers to communication that go on to cause Paul the most grief. The first glimpse into his struggles with language comes when he explains his marriage breakdown with ex-wife, Maura. He recounts, "[Maura] spoke so much while saying so little that I sometimes felt as if I were drowning in the heavy paste of her words" (21). While Maura apparently speaks many words of little consequence, he says of himself, "I had to choose my words carefully, because I knew that any one of them, innocuous though they seemed to me, might mire me in a nightlong conversation about my motives in uttering them" (21-2). Their relationship ends when Paul ceases to engage in conversations with Maura and, as a result, he becomes the recipient of her increasingly hostile notes. It is with an impersonal note reading, "Fuck you. I'm sick of your fucking notes" that Paul ends the marriage (22). Written words substitute for spoken words but neither are sufficient to save this union.

Just as Paul's marriage to Maura is negatively affected by poor communication, so too is his marriage to Lexy one year later. The primary source of conflict between them involves having children, as Lexy feels that she is not suited to motherhood. When pressed on the subject, Lexy responds, "I don't want to talk about it anymore, okay?" (Parkhurst 104). Lexy's unwillingness or inability to articulate her aversion to having children leads Paul to experience confusion, which fuels tension and resentment between them. After Lexy's death, Paul is watching television and recognises Lexy's voice on a pre-recorded call to a Psychic Helpline hosted by Lady Arabelle. He calls the Helpline hoping Lady Arabelle will recall speaking with Lexy and might be able to answer some questions and shed some light on her unexpected death. Even after Paul is told that the woman he is speaking to is not the same woman that Lexy spoke to (rather she is one of hundreds of psychics who work on the Helpline) he calls her regularly to talk about Lexy's death anyway. This demonstrates that for Paul, any words spoken about Lexy are better than silence, and he indulges in the words knowing that they are purely conjecture.

While the false words of the psychic bring Paul some solace, it is the eyewitness testimony of Lorelei that he believes will truly help him solve the mystery of Lexy's death. Teaching a dog to speak human words might seem futile to a reader who knows this has never been done in reality; thus, to lend credibility to the endeavour, Parkhurst has Paul draw on three instances where dogs have supposedly been taught to talk. The first case is drawn from the sixteenth-century and involves a story about a dog who was surrogated by a woman and learnt to speak from her. As the tale goes, the dog was with the woman as she lay dying and the dog's final words to her were, "Without your ear, I have no tongue" (Parkhurst 10). This story lends little credibility to Paul's research because it seems more like a fable or myth. It does, however, reinforce the anthropocentric idea that language only matters if it is heard and understood by humans.

The second example Paul offers to lend credibility to his research involves a nineteenth-century Hungarian named Vasil, whose experiments on a litter of Hungarian vizsla puppies involved massaging their throats to produce the capacity for human speech. As the story goes, Vasil's experiment resulted in one puppy gaining the ability to speak one word and another to gain fluency in a dialect that sounded like French. However, the final and most disturbing precedent to Paul's research involves a vivisectionist named Wendell Hollis, whose experiment is outlined in the novel as follows: "Over a period of years, Hollis performed surgery on more than a hundred dogs, changing the shape of their palates to make them more conducive to the forming of words" (Parkhurst 12). Hollis' experiments go further than merely surgically reconstructing palates. Paul explains that when Hollis' home laboratory was uncovered many of the dogs kept there had incurred horrific facial mutilations. A dog named Dog J was Hollis' only 'success' and subsequently, having being enabled the capacity to produce words, testified at Hollis' animal cruelty trial. The dog's testimony resulted in Hollis being convicted and sentenced to prison. Hollis' experiments to make dogs productive participants in human language were not only deemed cruel, but backfired on him as in the process of creating a linguistic dog, he provided a witness to attest to his crime.

Paul believes that Hollis' experiment to make a dog speak human words is a success. Indeed, he feels "a sort of kinship" with Hollis, and says, "Whatever the differences in our methodologies, we are both driven by the same desire. We both want, more than anything, to coax words from the canine throat" (Parkhurst 83). Since Paul has no intention of subjecting Lorelei to vivisection, he devises a more humane methodology:

It is my proposal to work with Lorelei on a series of experiments designed to help her acquire language in whatever ways are possible, given her physical and mental capacities. It is my proposal to teach Lorelei to speak. (13)

Paul's experiments involve training exercises to teach Lorelei tricks and to play certain games. While his project fails to achieve its aim, the process does inadvertently lead Paul to discover Lorelei's capacity as a receptive participant of human language and, more importantly, to recognise that she is already a highly skilled, communicative individual.

In order to determine Lorelei's potential for human language acquisition Paul begins with recording what he knows. Lorelei already engages with human language as a receptive participant and readily understands the meaning of many words spoken to her. Until he compiles a list, however, Paul does not realise that Lorelei knows around fifty words, including her name, certain commands and specific objects, which Paul points out matches the vocabulary understood by a thirteen-month-old child. The problem he faces is replicating in dogs the point whereby infants progress from being receptive participants to productive participants. Again, like the scientists from Banodyne Laboratory in Koontz's *Watchers*, Paul is interested in the progression from understanding words to comprehension, then the "leap from comprehension to speech" (Parkhurst 18). But where Koontz's novel, by emphasising Einstein's exceptionalism, reinforces assumptions about the 'dumbness' of ordinary dogs, something different happens in Parkhurst's text. Although he never does succeed in progressing Lorelei to the point of human speech, through the process of researching, Paul discovers the unique and complex language that is her own.

In addition to understanding many words, Paul discovers that Lorelei has a second vocabulary. Just as she was once unaware of the existence of human words, it seems Paul has

been ignorant of the existence of canine language: or doglish. He makes a remarkable discovery:

I've isolated and catalogued six distinct kinds of bark, four different yelps, three whines, and two growls. There is, for example, a certain sharp, staccato burst of noise she makes only when she has been trying to get my attention when it's past her feeding time, say, or time to go for a walk, and she utters it only when a sustained period of sitting at my feet and staring pointedly up at me has failed to elicit a response. There is a soft, low growl, almost leisurely in its cadences, that rises from deep in her throat when she hears that slam of a car door outside the house, which is entirely different from the angry warning growl that precedes a bout of barking in the event that the owner of said car has the nerve to walk up the front steps and knock on the door. (Parkhurst 82)

Observing Lorelei reveals the complex ways she communicates and Paul realises that her vocabulary is extensive and purposeful. After much practice, he says, "I have reached the point where, when Lorelei makes a sound, I know exactly what she means" (82). To this end, Paul gets much closer than Travis Cornell or Denny Swift in realising the innate communicative capacity of animals. His recognition of Lorelei's unique capacity for language and communication, however, does not prevent him from pursuing his research into canine language acquisition.

Paul's discovery that Lorelei is a proficient receptor of human language and that she has her own unique, complex language does not help him obtain the dog's testimony. Moreover, having come to appreciate Lorelei in a new way, Paul learns that Hollis was not as successful in achieving human language acquisition for dogs as he thought. Paul's research leads him to attend a clandestine suburban meeting of Hollis' disciples, called the Cerberus

Society. He is told that Dog J, Hollis' famous speaking canine, will address the members at the event. When Dog J is led out before the crowd, Paul is shocked by the degree of facial mutilation the dog has endured. He explains, "His head has been completely reconstructed. His snout has been shortened so much that his face looks almost caved in. His jaw has been squared and broadened to resemble the shape of a human jaw" (Parkhurst 179). Then when Dog J begins to speak, Paul's hopes of teaching Lorelei to speak words fade. He observes,

The sound that comes out is unearthly. A cross between a howl and a yelp, the noise shapes itself into a string of random vowels and consonants. I've never heard a living creature make a noise like this before. It's the saddest thing I've ever heard. But it isn't speech. (179-80)

Paul does not consider the sounds that Dog J produces to be speech but others in the room disagree. They listen enraptured as to Dog J makes vocalisations such as "Ayayay", "*Kafofwayo*", "*Woganowoo*" and "*Jukaluk*" (180). Now confused, Paul narrates, "Everyone in that room heard the same garbled noise I heard, and everyone but me interpreted that noise as speech. What did they think he was saying, that poor mutilated dog?" (199). His shocked reaction to Dog J's facial mutilation highlights the horrific consequences that befall nonhuman animals as a result of our failure to recognise that there are more kinds of communication, and different kinds of intelligence other than those privileged by the human species.

Human and canine vocabularies differ in Parkhurst's novel just as they do in reality, but there are also times when humans and dogs share one language. The first instance of this occurs in a passage where Lorelei sleeps in her designated place on the floor beside Paul's bed. Feeling sad and anxious about spending the night alone after Lexy's death, Paul invites Lorelei to join him on the bed. Paul describes this moment:

‘Come one up, girl. Up. Up.’ I pat the bed.

This is an unusual request on my part, and I have to repeat it a second time before she obeys. She yawns, then stands and stretches, and finally jumps on the bed and settles herself next to me. I stroke her fur...She sighs deeply – one of her most human sounds – and closes her eyes. (Parkhurst 88)

Notably, Lorelei does not obey Paul’s first command to break from protocol and climb onto the bed because this has not been allowed in the past. Indeed, this passage is a depiction of two individuals whose lives had been forever changed as a result of Lexy’s suicide and who are both expressing anxiety. Sighing – Lorelei’s most human sound – is often an expression of contentment in dogs as well as humans (Coren 71) and Lorelei sighs only once she is close to Paul and feeling content. Hence, Parkhurst writes a passage where the greatest degree of information about these characters’ states of mind, and the way they are communicating their feelings to each other, is achieved in gestures and sounds, not words. Thus, Paul moves beyond the anthropocentric assumption that what matters most in interspecies encounters is one or both parties’ ability to produce human language.

There are further examples of overlap between human and canine language in Parkhurst’s novel; however, it is not always the dog who is seen to replicate human-associated gestures and sounds. During the crucial passage in which Paul sits watching the telephone psychic infomercial on television, as he realises that the voice on the end of Lady Arabelle’s call is his late wife, he says “I lose my legs beneath me...and I make a sound like an animal struck” (Parkhurst 112). In this instance, Paul’s shock defies expression in words and instead his anguish is represented by a sound. In another example, Paul recalls an incident before Lexy’s death when after a serious argument Lexy shuts herself in the bathroom. Paul enters to find her sitting naked on the floor. At first she resists his embrace

but then submits. Paul narrates, “Her skin was hot to the touch. She let out a guttural sound, an animal noise of frustration and resistance. And still I held her fast” (147). In these examples, words prove insufficient to express the profound emotions being felt by the human characters. In place of words, ‘animalistic’ or non-species-specific vocalisations emerge.

The same dominant Western cultural attitudes that cast dogs as inferior because they cannot produce human language are shown to produce the kind of species prejudice that results in the victimisation of Lorelei in Parkhurst’s novel. Paul explains that Lexy found Lorelei on her doorstep as a five-month-old puppy. At this time, Lorelei had a neck wound that Paul would later come to discover was inflicted by The Cerberus Society before Lorelei escaped from their suburban vivisection laboratory. Lorelei, having avoided being the victim of vivisection once already as a puppy, attracts the Society’s attention as an adult through Paul’s involvement with them. Key members of the group steal her from Paul’s backyard in order to enact revenge on him for exposing their illegal activities to the authorities. Paul recovers Lorelei but while in the hands of the Cerberus Society, her larynx is surgically removed. Paul is devastated because his hopes of teaching Lorelei to speak words are ended but also because he has only just discovered her own unique voice. His hopes of obtaining her testimony are lost but so too is her ability to vocally communicate with him.

Jill Morstad keenly observes that *The Dogs of Babel* “is the story of a silent man and a talking dog, and the space they must travel together in an effort to reach understanding” (195). While the loss of a unique voice is a tragedy in Parkhurst’s novel, ‘voicelessness’ provides the opportunity for David Wroblewski to challenge assumptions regarding who does and does not possess a ‘voice’ in his novel, *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*. Edgar Sawtelle is a boy born mute who lives on farm in Wisconsin where the family business is breeding dogs. Wroblewski’s novel suggests that interspecies communication is not necessarily hindered by

the lack of linguistic ability and the author does this by employing a human protagonist who lacks the capacity for speech. Yet, it is this character with whom the dogs most effectively communicate.

The primary human-canine relationship depicted in the novel is that of Edgar and Almondine. Edgar is an only child who bonds instantly with Almondine, a Sawtelle dog who lives in the family home. Their bond is established in the passage describing Edgar's first memory of Almondine. Edgar is in his crib when a "muzzle comes hunting" and "tunnels beneath his blanket" and Edgar playfully squeezes "the crinkled black nose" (Wroblewski 46). Wroblewski describes how Almondine's tail switches side to side as Edgar "tugs the blackest whisker on her chin"; she licks his hand gently and he blows air in her face softly (46). She then "bows and woofs" before "she smears her tongue across his nose and forehead"; Edgar "claps a hand to his face but it's too late – she's away, spinning, biting her tail" (46). No words are exchanged throughout this interaction and yet Wroblewski describes a complex and intricate interspecies encounter that establishes the nature of Edgar and Almondine's speech-free relationship.

Almondine is one of the few in Edgar's life to accept him as he is, and local psychic Ida Paine is another. Edgar's parents, Trudy and Gar, are so desperate to find the cause of their son's muteness – a process that sees them consult multiple physicians and subject Edgar to many diagnostic tests – that Trudy takes Edgar to Ida's store and places her baby on the counter. Ida answers Trudy's unspoken question (which one assumes is related to whether Edgar will ever speak) with the word, "No" (Wroblewski 38). "Not ever?" Trudy asks, to which Ida replies, "He can use his hands" (38). Like Almondine, Ida does not assume that Edgar's communicative capacity is in any way diminished by his inability to speak words.

It is because Almondine has no expectations of Edgar that she is able to immediately and efficiently communicate with him. After describing Edgar's first memory of Almondine from the human perspective, Wroblewski balances this by having Almondine describe the moment she met Edgar. Their introduction occurs when Edgar is brought home from the hospital after his birth. Wroblewski writes:

Faint huffing sounds emanated from the fabric and a delicate pink hand jerked out.

Five fingers splayed and relaxed and so managed to express a yawn. That would have been the first time Almondine saw Edgar's hands. In a way, that would have been the first time Almondine saw him make a sign. (38)

In this passage, Almondine is attentive to the motion of Edgar's hands and translates the human hand gesture as a yawn rather than await sounds that might, under other circumstances, emit from his mouth. For Almondine, Edgar's vocal silence does not diminish his capacity to communicate with her. It merely changes the basis upon which communication between them takes place.

Wroblewski presents Edgar's bond with Almondine as being more than an interspecies relationship: it is a kinship. The basis of this kinship becomes known when Edgar is six months old and a stranger named Louisa Wilkes arrives unexpectedly at the Sawtelle's house, having been directed to the property by Ida Paine. It transpires that Louisa is the child of deaf parents and a teacher of sign language, and so she initiates a discussion with Trudy about Edgar's muteness. During the conversation she notices Almondine, whose expressions Louise says, reminds her of her nephew's dog, Benny, who, it turns out, is also Sawtelle bred. Regarding Benny, Louisa says, "I've never seen a dog quite so aware of conversation. I could swear he turns towards me when he thinks it is my turn to speak" (Wroblewski 46). When Louisa signs to Edgar – who she recognises is mute but not deaf or

unintelligent – the nature of Edgar and Almondine’s kinship materialises. Literary reviewer Mike Peed identifies it when he writes Edgar is “a boy who, like the family’s dogs, can hear but cannot speak” (“The Dog Whisperer” 2008). Until he is taught to sign, Edgar partakes in human language as a receptive participant, in precisely the same way as dogs, and thus Almondine.

Just as dogs use species-specific gestures, Edgar creates a distinctive vocabulary of his own, although his vocabulary, which is distinct from conventional sign language, makes him prone to being misunderstood and, as a consequence, feel alienated. Unlike dogs, he does develop to be a productive participant in conversations involving human language; nonetheless, his version of sign language is unique. Edgar’s manner of signing is not inefficient but it does need to be learned in order to be understood. This is clear in the passages involving Edgar and his uncle Claude, who makes little effort to learn Edgar’s signs. Edgar does not know Claude prior to his arrival at the farm for a short stay; hence, Claude does not know Edgar, or anything about sign language. Edgar teaches his uncle a “couple of signs”, which the reader is told, “Claude promptly forgot” (Wroblewski 61). This reveals Claude’s disinterest in learning Edgar’s language, which is demonstrated again during a discussion in which Claude tells Edgar that one of the stairs in the barn squeaks. When Edgar responds by signing that he already knows about the squeaky stair, Claude is not looking at him so does not see his sign. These examples show that – like Enzo and pre-lingual Zoe in Stein’s novel – Edgar’s difference, that is being mute, positions him outside of the so-called ‘adult-driven World Order’ as are the Sawtelle (and all other) dogs. In other words, he too is the possessor and user of a nonverbal, gesture based communication system that adults, with the exception of his mother and father, do not understand. It does not matter that Edgar and Claude are members of the same species, or what vocabulary they use, because their attempt to communicate fails. Almondine, on the other hand, who is not a human and does not have

the capacity to produce human language, understands Edgar better than Claude. She actively seeks ways to communicate with Edgar, observes and respects him.

While Edgar is perceived to be deficient in human spoken language the Sawtelle dogs, on the other hand, are perceived to be more proficient than typical dogs in engaging with human modes of communication. Sawtelle dogs have supposedly been selectively bred with a greater ability to interact with humans on an intellectual level. When talking with Edgar about the business of breeding Sawtelle dogs, Trudy asks her son whether he thinks they are selling dogs or something more. Edgar does not know the answer until later in the novel, after he has run away from home and is observing an interaction between Henry, a Samaritan who takes him in, and one of the Sawtelle dogs named Tinder. Edgar attempts to teach Henry how to command Tinder to perform guided fetches. At first, Henry's flawed attempts to use command using hand gestures confuses Tinder. When Henry finally masters the skill of commanding the dog, Edgar, who is observing, realises the answer to Trudy's question. The Sawtelles are not selling ordinary dogs, but are rather selling dogs with enhanced abilities to communicate with humans.

One example of successful non-verbal communication between human and dog occurs in the passage where Edgar patiently instructs Almondine how to descend the stairs in the barn without making a sound. Wroblewski writes:

[Edgar] stepped quickly down to the sixth and fifth and turned back and picked up Almondine's foot and stroked it.

He tapped the owl-eye.⁵ Here.

She stepped down.

⁵ 'Owl eye' refers to the knot in the wood.

Yes. Good girl. (55)

Teaching Almondine where to step by utilising her power of observation and memory is no extraordinary feat and is within the capability of most dogs. Many dog trainers would likely agree that patience, repetition and praise are all that is required to teach a dog most things, including the sequence of steps that allow one to silently descend stairs. Human language is made redundant here and the assumption that effective and complex communication relies on human language is challenged. In this passage, the boy and his dog are able to communicate using only gestures at an advanced level without the need for either to produce or comprehend human language.

Since Edgar's mode of communication is unconventional and, as outlined previously, signing is not always recognised to be as sophisticated as spoken word, he represents dogs who like him, are marginalised because they have 'trivialised' vocabularies. Ron Charles, writing for the *The Washington Post*, chooses the phrase "Terrible Silence" to head his review of Wroblewski's novel, but silence is far from terrible in this novel. As Marion Copeland observes, "Edgar's muteness...allows him to attend to voices other than his own" (357-8). Indeed, Wroblewski's novel, like Parkhurst's, demonstrates that there is more than one kind of voice and the voice is not human specific.

Authors of dog narratives often incorporate into their novels issues relating to language and its effect on interspecies communication. *Watchers* is a narrative that reflects many of the Western cultural prejudices that see nonhuman animals cast as inferior to humans. Koontz brands dogs as 'dopey' and 'dumb' by comparing them to Einstein, who is able to produce human language. This diminishes the value of dogs' unique and exceptional species-specific skills and qualities. Stein's decision to have a dog narrate *The Art of Racing in the Rain* lends verisimilitude to the canine protagonist's feelings of inferiority, which

stems from his inability to speak using words. Read as structural irony, it can be argued that Stein effectively undermines notions of human exceptionalism based on the privileging of human language. In the end, nevertheless, Western anthropocentric ideologies proposing that humans are superior to other animals are ultimately reinforced when Enzo is reincarnated as a human and finally achieves his life-long dream of shaking hands with and speaking to Denny.

In different ways and to various degrees Koontz and Stein reinforce notions of human exceptionalism stemming from humans' ability to communicate using human language. Parkhurst and Wroblewski, on the other hand, explicitly challenge human exceptionalism and the assumption that dogs are unintelligent in their narratives by highlighting the canine species' ability to communicate successfully with humans using non-linguistic methods. In *The Dogs of Babel*, Parkhurst suggests that human language is flawed, and the efficacy of human language is destabilised through the juxtaposition of the plot and subplot. While Paul strives to teach Lorelei to speak words, in order to obtain the truth about Lexy's suicide, flashbacks to Paul and Lexy's marriage show words to be deceptive and unreliable. In a horrible irony, Paul's quest to obtain words from Lorelei results in her larynx being surgically removed, which strips her of her own unique voice and the ability to vocalise at all. Wroblewski also challenges the veneration of human language in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* by employing a protagonist who, like dogs, is perceived to be 'voiceless'. Wroblewski further disrupts assumptions about the importance of spoken words by having Edgar – despite his 'disability' – emerge as the one who communicates the most successfully with dogs in the novel.

Performing a canine-centric critique of dog narratives can expose some of the key dominant discourses that underlie reductive attitudes towards dogs in contemporary Western culture. Species prejudice stemming from Western religious and philosophical perspectives

often rests upon assumptions that animals other than humans lack an immortal soul, the capacity for reason, the capability to produce human language, and a voice with which to speak. Dogs' limitations as participants in human language results in their marginalisation and often fuels misunderstandings that can lead to their victimisation and exposes them to violence. Each of these novels raises important questions about the narrow definition of 'language' and they offer us the opportunity to question the prevailing prejudices that humans impose on dogs and other nonhuman animal species who do not communicate using spoken or written words. Importantly, novels incorporating dogs as characters can help us recognise that there are voices other than those of humanity.

Chapter Two

Dogs as Objects or Subjects-of-a-Life

As outlined in Chapter One, a perceived division exists between humans and other animals that has been created and fortified by influential ideas stemming from Classical Western philosophy and reinforced by subsequent discourses such as Christianity and Cartesianism. Dogs – along with all other nonhuman animal species – have been denied souls, sensibility and intelligence, attributes that are uniquely associated with humans and notions of personhood.⁶ Nonhuman animals are not typically considered to be persons and are positioned instead under antonymic categories like ‘things’, ‘property’ and ‘objects’.⁷ Or to borrow a phrase from author J. M Coetzee’s pro-animal protagonist Elizabeth Costello: “man is godlike, animals thinglike” (23). Contrary to common belief, the word ‘person’ does not mean human, and actually derives from *persona* and means “a mask” or character (Midgley 53). Mary Midgley summarises German philosopher Immanuel Kant’s definition of what constitutes a ‘person’: “It is the idea of a rational being, capable of choice and therefore endowed with dignity, worthy of respect, having rights; one that must be regarded always as an end in itself, not only as a means to the ends of others” (54).⁸ While Kant does not exclude nonhuman animals from this definition, the fact they are still deemed to lack valued forms of intelligence such as rationality implicitly excludes them from being granted personhood.

Midgley, however, argues that certain species of nonhuman animals should not be denied personhood simply because of any particular feature they lack; rather they should be

⁶ For further discussion of nonhuman animals as nonpersons, see Mary Midgley’s essay “Persons and Non-Persons” in Singer, Peter, ed. *In Defense of Animals*. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985. 52-62.

⁷ Midgley also explains that historically, women and slaves were denied personhood (52), which was crucial in the oppression, and social and legal disenfranchisement of these individuals who like nonhuman animals, are classed as ‘others’.

⁸ Ethologist Marc Bekoff points out that while many nonhuman animals meet the definition of ‘person’ but are nevertheless denied personhood, many humans (such as those who suffer “major losses of locomotor, cognitive and physiological functions”) remain classified as persons even after they no longer fit the definition (14).

viewed as persons because “they are highly sensitive social beings” (62).⁹ To counter the view that nonhuman animals are objects, American animal rights philosopher Tom Regan argues that nonhuman animals of many species fulfil the definition of what he terms ‘the subject-of-a-life’. In his 1983 book, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Regan explains that the subject-of-a-life category applies to any animal who has

beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future,¹⁰ including their own future; an emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain; preference and welfare interests; the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychophysical identity over time; and an individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for them, logically independently of their utility for others and logically independently of their being the object of anyone else’s interests. (243)

Animals who fulfil these criteria have, he states, “a distinctive kind of value – inherent value – and are not to be viewed or treated as mere receptacles” (Regan 243). It is because of their inherent value that such animals are worthy of moral consideration and consequently humans have a moral duty not to act cruelly towards them (Regan 195). When referring throughout this chapter to the way novelists represent dogs as ‘persons’, I am therefore using the term in accordance both with Midgley’s assertion that nonhuman animals are highly sensitive social beings, and with Regan’s definition of the subject-of-a-life.

Many would agree that dogs are social, sensitive beings with rich emotional lives, desires, goals and interests independent of their usefulness to others (Bekoff; Dawkins; Horowitz; Coren; Garber). Yet despite occupying a privileged position in human hearts and

⁹ I would argue that even sensitive *solitary* animals can fulfil the criteria of personhood.

¹⁰ Or had these capacities at one time in the case of long-term or permanent memory loss resulting from disease or injury, one might presume.

homes, dogs remain, to varying degrees, outcasts of human society. While they are sometimes thought to possess traits typically associated with humans, such as feelings, intelligence and agency, dogs are often adopted then abandoned, welcomed then rejected, cherished and mistreated *en masse* (Palmer 570). Susan McHugh explains, “The dangers for contemporary dogs are real: destroyed by the millions every year as unwanted pets, strays and research subjects, domesticated dogs bear the double-bind of sharing many of the maladies as well as the joys of living the so-called good life...” (9). McHugh suggests that it is through these “lived contradictions” that Western humanity’s “conflicting attitudes towards dogs” becomes visible (9). The double-bind that produces this paradoxical treatment of dogs in Western society is both reflected and interrogated in many works of popular fiction, especially the genre I have been calling ‘dog narratives’. Such novels often represent the most negative aspect of the double bind by incorporating depictions of animal abuse.

Various forms of animal abuse ranging from violence through to neglect are central motifs in four of the narratives examined in this thesis: Jack Ketchum’s *Red* (1995), Gerard Donovan’s *Julius Winsome* (2006), Nancy Kress’ *Dogs* (2008) and Dan Rhodes’ *Timoleon Vieta Come Home: A Sentimental Journey* (2003). Via their inclusion of depictions of animal abuse, these novels raise questions regarding the paradoxical way dogs are categorised in Western culture. In raising these questions, these narratives challenge the view that dogs are ‘things’ or ‘objects’ by finding literary ways of presenting accounts of dogdom, and thereby allowing the reader to visit the grim social realities of many dogs living in contemporary Western culture. These texts offer representations of the negative aspects of being a dog bred for the purposes of providing humans with companionship and, as a result, they expose the consequences of the conflict between dualistic views of dogs; that is, when dogs are considered objects or property by some and sensitive social beings by others.

The canine companion at the centre of Ketchum's novel, an elderly crossbreed named Red, is fatally shot in an apparently random act of violence. Red's human companion is 67-year-old Avery Allan Ludlow, a retired war veteran and widower, who is approached by three youths while river-fishing. After a failed attempt to rob Avery, one of the boys shoots Red with a shotgun. Ketchum presents Red's murder and events surrounding it in ways that reveal tensions stemming from conflicting attitudes towards dogs as they exist in Western culture, such as the ways dogs are considered to be unique, valuable and significant individuals by some, and replaceable possessions by others.

Ketchum exposes the causes and consequences of paradoxical attitudes towards dogs in his novel by focussing explicitly on the social reality linking domestic abuse and animal cruelty, and he takes this approach to critique the abuse of power. He begins by revealing Red's killer to be 18-year-old Daniel McCormack, whose temperament and upbringing are shown to be contributing factors to his cruel and violent behaviour, not only towards nonhuman animals, but also fellow humans. On the day of the shooting, Avery is fishing as Red lies in the sun on the riverbank nearby. While Avery is hunting fish, it is clarified that he no longer partakes in "blood sports" (Ketchum 16); that is, he is no longer a recreational hunter but a subsistence hunter who takes only what is legally allowed and is sufficient to feed him and his dog.¹¹ The approach of the amateur hunters is signalled when Avery hears them disturbing the peace and detects the smell of gun oil, indicating a poorly swabbed firearm. When the boys appear, Avery notices that one, later revealed to be Daniel, is wearing a t-shirt brandishing a sexist image and the slogan "STOLEN FROM MABEL'S

¹¹ Of course fishing cannot in reality be isolated from other forms of hunting as this recreational pastime is just as brutal as hunting with guns (Gadenne 67-8). Furthermore, fish feel pain and can suffer (Braithwaite). Ketchum deliberately distinguishes Avery's hunting practice from Daniel's when he clarifies that Avery is subsistence hunting whereas hunting for fun or entertainment is particularly cruel. He equates recognition of this distinction with maturity and wisdom and most importantly, with respect for nonhuman animal life.

WHOREHOUSE”, and has a shotgun recklessly “slung over his shoulder like it was a stick or a bat, not a firearm” (17-18). This passage clearly hints that Daniel has no respect for either women or weapons.

Ketchum develops Daniel’s characterisation as a social deviant and it becomes clear that Daniel also lacks respect for his elders and nonhuman animals. After a brief, seemingly polite conversation about Avery’s daily catch, Daniel asks about Red. Avery tells the boys that Red is about thirteen or fourteen years old and friendly. One of the boys, named Pete, then rudely remarks, “Raggedy old fella” (Ketchum 19). Ketchum writes: Avery “had nothing to say to that. He didn’t much like the boy’s tone, though. He gathered that the boy didn’t have much use for animals” (19). Although friendly, Red growls when Daniel orders Avery to hand over his wallet and flicks off the gun’s safety catch. Since Avery’s wallet is in his car, the boys take his keys, but before they leave, Daniel asks for the dog’s name. Avery says “Red” and Ketchum writes:

The boy took a deep breath and blew it out and seemed calmer and the old man thought it was possible that the storm in the boy was passing though he didn’t understand why that should be with just the knowing of a name and then the boy whirled and the dog was getting up out of his crouch, so much slower that he would have just a year ago when he was only that much younger, sensing something beyond the old man’s staying hand or his power over events and the boy took one step towards him and the shotgun tore deep through the peace of the river...there wasn’t even a yelp or a cry because the top of the dog’s head wasn’t there anymore nor the quick brown eyes nor the cat-scarred nose, all of them blasted into the bush behind the dog like a sudden rain of familiar flesh, the very look of the dog a sudden memory. (23)

Having shot Red for no apparent reason, the boys cruelly laugh and shout, “Red!”, “He’s red now!” (23). Ketchum writes: “The old man stood there stunned. Why? He thought. Dear god [*sic*], *why?*” (23).

As the novel progresses the circumstances leading up to this incident are unravelled and the paradoxical reactions of the town citizens to the crime are exposed. Ketchum reveals that Daniel McCormack’s ability to perpetrate such a violent act of animal cruelty is a symptom of the socio-cultural conditions in which he was raised and now lives. His lack of compassion towards others is presented as a consequence of his home life and the attitudes of the culture within which he belongs. Avery discovers that Daniel is the teenage son of Michael D. McCormack, a local wealthy property developer and that Daniel’s domestic situation is one defined by power relations. This is first implied when after the shooting, Avery visits the McCormack family home and is met at the door by a maid described as “a small young black woman with a withered left hand that was discoloured white from her wrist to the knuckles” – a detail that will become significant a little later in the novel (Ketchum 38). Daniel’s father summons his sons to face Avery, who recognises the second younger sibling, Harold, as having been present at Red’s shooting. In their father’s presence, the boys deny their involvement in the crime but through observing Harold’s body language, Avery detects the boy’s fear. Hoping to gain a confession, Avery later follows Harold to talk with him alone. During their conversation, Harold is anxious that Daniel might observe them talking and says Daniel would be “pretty damn mad if he knew I was talking to you” (110). Avery then asks, “He get mad a lot, your brother?” When Harold does not reply, Avery asks, “Who are you afraid of, Harold? Your brother? Your father?” to which Harold replies, “Mr Ludlow, believe me, you haven’t got a clue” (111). Crucially, before walking away, Harold says, “I want you to consider why my father would hire a maid with a crippled hand...Out of all the help available around here, my father chooses her” (112). Harold’s comment leads

Avery to ponder the values of the people he is dealing with. Ketchum makes it clear that Michael McCormack did not hire the woman out of compassion for her disability; rather, “[Avery]wondered how often McCormack found some way to remind the woman of her withered hand or even how he might choose to go about it. If with regard to McCormack he was dealing with the ordinary smug superiority of the rich or whether it was cruelty” (112). Avery links the McCormacks’ wealth to their sense of superiority, visible in their abuse of others whom they perceive as weak or inferior. Daniel and his father equate wealth with dominance and dominance involves the exertion of power. They abuse their power to victimise those they consider less valuable and significant than themselves, such as Carla the maid, Avery, and Avery’s gentle, elderly canine companion, Red.

The social link between domestic violence and animal cruelty is reflected in Ketchum’s novel through his attention to the ways in which abuse of power is learned and modelled.¹² Ketchum’s novel is structured around a victim hierarchy whereby Michael McCormack exploits Carla and then Daniel mirrors this behaviour through the intimidation and bullying of his brother, Harold, his disregard and disrespect for Avery and the murder of Avery’s dog. Perhaps inadvertently on Ketchum’s part, the way that abuse is produced and replicated in the McCormack family reflects the generational inheritability of reductive attitudes about nonhuman animals in Western culture stemming from religious, philosophical and scientific discourses that largely centre on distancing nonhuman animals from humans and categorising them as property or objects rather than as subjects or persons.

Companion animals are not considered to be persons in Western legal discourse because they are viewed as objects; bred to be sold, purchased traded and ‘owned’. Joan Dunayer explains: “Under the law, ‘persons’ are rights-holders whereas ‘animals’ are not”

¹² For comprehensive studies on the link between domestic violence and animal cruelty see Gullone (2012).

(171). Of course, *Homo sapiens* are taxonomically classified as animals but legal discourse, as well as the numerous cultural discourses discussed in Chapter One, reinforces the assumption that humans are superior to, and distinct from, nonhuman animal species. So instead of being granted individual rights, dogs are legally declared human property; thus, despite being adopted into human families and treated as family members, dogs are not afforded legal rights as 'persons'. This means they are often insufficiently protected when they are abused (Dunayer 170). It is a crime to shoot and kill a dog for pleasure in Ketchum's fictional world just as it is in many societies with animal welfare legislation; nevertheless, Avery feels legally unsupported. He does receive moral support from some members of the community, including his employee, Bill Prine, Clarence, an elderly clerk employed by the store who sold Daniel ammunition, Sheriff Tom Bridgewater, his friend Emma Siddons and journalist Carrie Donnel; nevertheless, the law does not support him. In the novel, Avery's lawyer Sam Berry explains the status quo to his client:

"First let's assume your boy is eighteen or over. If not, it's a matter of juvenile court and all they're going to give him is a slap on the fanny...But let's assume he is [over eighteen years old]. A crime like this would go before a judge in district court under title 17, section 1031, cruelty to animals. That carries a mandatory fine of a hundred dollars, though, theoretically, a prosecutor could go for more. I say theoretically because most prosecutors would be happy with the hundred and some jail time. Under the law the most you could ask for in jail and on animal cruelty is three hundred and sixty-four days. And practically speaking, no prosecutor in his right mind would shoot for more than thirty. Fact is, he'd be hoping like hell to get ten." (49-50)

Sam's explanation shows how the legal devaluation of animal lives is structurally related to, and complicit with, the kind of callousness that Daniel shows when he shoots Red. He goes

on to say why this is the case: “I’m talking *property* here, Av. Under the law, an animal’s just *property*. Not only here in Maine but in damn near every state in the Union” (50). Sam Berry’s summary of the way that the law fails to take animal cruelty seriously and successfully prosecute perpetrators is not limited to the fictional world as Ketchum’s summary of the animal cruelty laws in Maine, United States is drawn from the actual legislation.¹³ The legal system’s failure to enact justice for Red’s death is a source of frustration for Avery. He puts his faith in the law but is disappointed to learn that the Assistant District Attorney has declined to prosecute.

Avery is left unsupported by the law and he also encounters insensitive attitudes among acquaintances. Emma Siddons, for example, suggests Avery should go straight out and buy himself a puppy to deal with his loss. Suggesting a person replace a *human* loved one immediately following such a tragic loss would surely be construed as insensitive and yet, it is “almost commonplace” to suggest pets are replaced soon after their deaths to accelerate emotional healing (Podrazik et al 376), which is clearly a point Ketchum wants to emphasise. Emma’s comment reinforces the idea that however much they may be loved, dogs are liable to be seen as replaceable objects rather than irreplaceable subjects. Another example is Sam Berry who discourages Avery from pursuing a law suit, saying, “All this time, all this work and all this *expense* for an old mongrel dog you already buried” (Ketchum 51). However, Avery clearly does not consider Red to be a worthless mongrel dog.

Although Red is killed in the novel’s opening pages he has a presence throughout the narrative via Avery’s memories of him. Red is remembered as a dog who once slept on a floor rug but then decided to sleep on the bed beside Avery after his wife Mary and son Tim’s deaths. Avery remembers how Red would pass wind in his sleep and how he seemed to be

¹³ See <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/17/title17sec1031.html>

dreaming, perhaps “running, chasing, cats or rabbits” or “running next to Mary or Tim” (Ketchum 147). Red clearly displays autonomy and shows preference in his choice to sleep in one particular location over another. The focus on Red’s dreams suggests that he has an inner life, which expresses his subjectivity. Red even maintains a literal presence after his death when Avery exhumes the dog’s body to show to the McCormacks. Avery’s determination not to allow Red to be disregarded after his death is apparent when, despite having been shot in the ear, run off the road into a ditch, bludgeoned and left for dead in the forest by the McCormacks, Avery regains consciousness only to stagger back to the McCormacks’ cabin – where he had visited earlier to confront the family – to retrieve Red’s body, which he left on their porch. Red’s presence in this novel through Avery’s refusal to let his dog’s death pass as insignificant contrasts with the many dismissive and reductive attitudes of those people he encounters and is testament to depth of his attachment to his canine companion. He rejects Red’s categorisation as a disposable, replaceable commodity.

Avery’s father is one of the few in the novel to believe that Red’s life matters and that a dog has intrinsic worth outside of his or her value to humans. Feeling frustrated with the dismissive attitudes of those around him and the lack of legal support, Avery visits his father in an aged-care facility for advice. When Avery tells his father that his anger and frustration has driven him to contemplate taking drastic, unlawful action to avenge Red’s death, his father understands. He says, “Hell, blood’s blood. You ever taste an animal’s? It tastes exactly like your own does. You tell me why a man’s blood is any better or more precious than a dog’s blood” (Ketchum 107). Even though Avery’s father was not Red’s human companion, he is able to recognise that Red was not just an object, but a feeling living being whose life had meaning and value. More than just being a unique individual who Avery cared for, Red is, in Avery’s and his father’s opinions, as worthy of justice as any victim of a violent crime.

In Ketchum's novel, therefore, dogdom is depicted as being a state of limbo; that is, dogs are situated somewhere between person and property in the eyes of society and this leads to conflict between people. In this way, Ketchum's narrative is comparable with the storyline of Gerard Donovan's novel, *Julius Winsome*. In Donovan's narrative, a friendly pit-bull terrier named Hobbes is shot dead at point blank range by an unidentified hunter. Just as Ketchum explores ideas relating to power and abuse in *Red*, so too does Donovan in *Julius Winsome*; however, whereas Ketchum approaches the topic through the link between the abuse of power and animal cruelty, Donovan addresses violence perpetrated against nonhuman animals through the lens of hunting culture. Of course, hunting is also the situation that brings Avery and Daniel McCormack together in *Red* – since Daniel is out hunting with a shotgun when he comes across Avery fishing. However, issues relating to hunting do not dominate the narrative in *Red* to the degree that they do in *Julius Winsome*. Hobbes' human guardian, Julius Winsome, lives in a secluded cabin in the woods, in an area in Maine popular for hunting bears and deer. Almost forty minutes after hearing a gunshot unusually close by, he finds Hobbes "lying in the flowers, bleeding, breathing, but barely" with a fatal shotgun wound (Donovan 12). Julius rushes Hobbes to the veterinarian who informs him that the gunshot was administered at close range, just inches away. When the veterinarian says, "You have to be mighty cruel and then some to pull the trigger on a dog like that" (13), Julius realises that Hobbes' fatal injury was intentionally and maliciously inflicted.

Like Avery Ludlow in *Red*, Julius Winsome cannot comprehend why anyone would murder a friendly domesticated dog, and like Avery, Julius draws conclusions about the character and values of the type of person who would commit such an act. Owing to the remote location of his cabin, and the frequency with which hunters use the surrounding woods, Julius concludes that the person who murdered Hobbes is a hunter. He determines the person to be what reviewer Diane Evans craftily summarises as a "roaming hunter - probably

a man, a rifle-carrier, enthusiast of Remington slide action and Rifle Association badges, killer of bears, deer, birds – and dogs” (52). Therefore, Hobbes’ killer is a person for whom violence is commonplace, for whom killing is a hobby and a way of life; a person who has the capacity to view nonhuman animals as objects rather than subjects and who enjoys dominating nonhuman animals and seeks to kill them for pleasure.¹⁴

The motive for Hobbes’ murder is never revealed but there is the hint of a possible motive in the novel: Hobbes is a pit-bull terrier. As discussed earlier in this chapter, domesticated dogs under the law are property, and not persons, and the novels of Ketchum and Donovan reflect societal attitudes that diminish the value of dogs as subjects-of-a-life. The pit bull is one breed, however, whose object status is compounded not only as a result of being a dog, but because this particular breed is often despised and demonised. A common reaction amongst Western middle-class people to this maligned breed is described by Judy Cohen and John Richardson as “Pit Pull Panic”. In their article by the same name, they reiterate how pit-bulls are “the archetype of canine evil, predators of the defenseless. Unpredictable companions that kill and maim without discretion. Walking horror shows bred with an appetite for violence” (citing Verzemnieks 285).¹⁵ In order to maintain this negative perception of pit bulls, dogs of this breed are often denied personal identities and succumb to the demonisation of the entire breed. They become seen as dangerous weapons; as objects, rather than as sensitive individuals.

¹⁴ It is necessary to note that in contrast, some hunters believe that their hunting practices are a way of showing respect for nature and state that they view their prey as subjects rather than objects. Eco-feminist Marti Kheel discusses this category of hunter, calling one who engages in this form of hunting a “Holistic Hunter” (35-6).

¹⁵ According to Twining et al, negative perception of pit bulls is quite a recent phenomenon, for between 1890 to 1948 “pit bulls were very popular dogs to own because they were seen as ‘a good-natured watchdog and family pet’” (26).

Read in this way, Donovan's novel is a response to the widespread stigmatisation and demonisation of this particular breed. This author subverts the stereotypic notion of the menacing pit bull who makes victims of others by positioning Hobbes as the victim of social stigma. Donovan's intentions are revealed in an interview with Dermott Bolger, where he explains:

I lived with a pit bull terrier for five years. A much-maligned breed that does not deserve its reputation because the conditions where you hear about them attacking people are based on them being chained up or kept in small spaces and made to fight with each other. I lived with this dog for five years and it took me five years to learn the language of dogs, how dogs relate to you, how they speak to you, and all of that went into the novel. (14)

Firstly, it is significant that Donovan places emphasis on learning the dog's language in order to ensure harmony and efficient interspecies communication. As discussed in Chapter One, a lack of understanding of another species' mechanisms of communication is often the cause of problematic interspecies relations, which can lead to violence. Donovan not only advocates that humans have a responsibility to learn doglish and relate to dogs in a way that recognises and respects the experience of dogdom, but he specifically utilises the socio-cultural anxiety arising from a fear of certain dog breeds to challenge assumptions that lead to the depersonalisation and persecution of pit bulls in his novel.

Donovan begins his critique of breed stigmatisation by revealing reductive attitudes towards dogs generally before focussing specifically on breed prejudice. Julius uncovers the dismissive attitudes aimed at domesticated dogs that permeate his community when he posts a public notice to gather information about the shooting. Clearly, not everybody considers the wanton killing of a dog worthy of seeking justice because shortly after pinning the notice up,

it is defaced with insensitive comments such as “Bye-bye dog” and “So what, one less dog. Get over it” (Donovan 22). Such dismissive responses reflect the same indifferent and insensitive attitudes that Avery Ludlow experiences in response to the shooting death of his dog Red in Ketchum’s novel. Thus, both authors depict a gentle-natured, much-loved and well socialised dog who is shot in a random act of violence and, based on those attitudes expressed in the novel by members of the respective societies, there is surprisingly little sympathy for the dogs or the dogs’ human companions.

Donovan’s critique of breed prejudice appears to begin in the passage where he reveals how Hobbes was acquired as a puppy from the Fort Kent animal shelter for the purpose of providing Julius with companionship. It is not surprising that Julius immediately identifies with this particular puppy considering that the two – man and dog – share the experience of being social outcasts. When Julius sees Hobbes as a puppy in a cage, his female companion at the time, Claire, points out “That’s a dangerous breed” (Donovan 89). Julius adopts the puppy anyway and Claire, who first suggested Julius acquire a canine companion, says, “I’m sorry I suggested anything...Now when I come [to visit] I will be facing a pit bull” (89). Julius is also made privy to the stigma associated with this particular dog breed during an encounter with a shelter worker. Donovan writes:

The boy who worked there nodded sadly as if he knew this fellow’s time was up; the breed and his size would win no one’s heart or a home to him. He would be put to sleep. The boy said he was brought in by a couple who had baby twins and couldn’t have him around the house, they were afraid. (52)

While certain dog breeds, such as the golden retriever, are idealised as the ‘perfect pet’, pit bulls exist at the other end of the spectrum. Hillary Twining, Arnold Arluke and Gary Patronek, who performed an ethnographic study on this theme, explain that

pit bulls have come to be seen as an abomination or disturbance in the natural order – an unacceptable threat to the perceived security and stability of the entire community and a violation of the almost sacred image of the dog as an amiable cultural hero. (26)

Donovan builds this prejudice into the structure of his novel by implying that, although Hobbes displays no aggressive tendencies and does no harm, he is shot and killed simply because he is identifiable as a member of this socially reviled dog breed.

Just as Ketchum does in *Red*, Donovan gives his canine character Hobbes personality and character even after his death via Julius' memories of him. Hobbes is remembered as a "friendly but punchy little pit-bull terrier" who, Julius says, "always greeted me when I returned home" (Donovan 58, 69). He elaborates:

[H]e ran from his spot in the hot wood-pile, from his walks in the woods, where he went for solitude or whatever drives them there, ran to see me after my landscaping work, ran to greet me when I was happy, ran to greet me when I was unhappy, ran to greet me when I was distracted, vague, thoughtful. (69)

Furthermore, Julius describes the small pleasures that existed in Hobbes' life, such as "the sound of the truck's keys...[which] brought him bounding from the woods or scratching to get out the door" (57). Julius recalls: "With his head out the window and a breeze in his face as we drove along the countryside, he was a dog run through with happiness..." (57). As Julius buries his companion's body, he struggles to "throw that first shovel of clay over his face, to see a hole gouged around the body that had so often ran [*sic*] after toys I'd thrown or shivered in dreams on the floor as he ran and barked" (15). Notably, the reference to a dog's capacity to dream is, similarly to Ketchum in *Red*, used by Donovan to imply the existence of an inner life and therefore subjectivity.

It is such poignant memories that go some way towards explaining Julius' extreme reaction to Hobbes' wrongful death. Julius Winsome, like Avery Ludlow in *Red*, does not condone recreational hunting or the wanton killing of socially 'protected' companion animals, but unlike Avery, who places his faith in the law, Julius bypasses the legal system and decides to personally enact revenge for Hobbes' murder. However, because he does not know the identity of Hobbes' killer, Julius chooses to undertake a sniper-styled assassination of random hunters in the woods proximate to his cabin. On the first morning of his revenge expedition he waits two hours before a truck brandishing deer antlers on the grille appears. He observes a man in his thirties, wearing camouflage, carrying a rifle while drinking a beer. Julius wounds the hunter with a shot to the neck before showing the dying man a drawing of Hobbes and saying, "Did you shoot this dog" (Donovan 33). Significantly, Donovan omits the question mark here indicating that this is not a question, but rather a statement. Despite the hunter's denial, Julius watches him die. He then removes a magazine entitled *Hunt* from the man's vehicle, returns to his cabin and calmly drinks tea. He stands in the spot where Hobbes used to sleep and simply states, "I missed my friend" (35).

In Chapter One, I discussed the way language functions to divide humans from other animals, as this trope is common in fiction exploring human-dog relationships and I argued that humans often use the 'language barrier' to justify the objectification of nonhuman animals. Language is also used as a device to create distance between human and victim in Donovan's novel. After Hobbes' murder, Julius randomly stalks and kills hunters who stray into the vicinity of the cabin. On each occasion after shooting a hunter, he approaches the dying man and speaks to him using obscure words that his father tells him were invented by Shakespeare. "You are blood-bolted...You are besmoiled," he tells his first victim (Donovan 33). To another he says, "Amort, bow hunter" (48), and he tells another "your convoy is a cullion"; finally, he says, "Prithee...I took you, harvested you" (49). Julius explains:

As part of my education [my father] had me write out lists with Shakespeare's words in them, a few new words every day, using his fountain pen, and soon those words and the smell of ink entered my mind, and when I began to speak them in daily use my father was quietly pleased... (20)

The effect of using Shakespeare is two-fold in this novel. In the first instance, it relates to the connection between Shakespeare's words and Julius' memory of his father, who encouraged his son to read Shakespeare. More importantly, Julius' use of Shakespearian vocabulary alienates his victims because they cannot understand this language. In the same way as humans disenfranchise nonhuman animals because they 'cannot' use human language, as discussed in Chapter One, Julius can rationalise that his victims are not akin to him for this same reason. Moreover, his use of a 'foreign' vocabulary makes it easier for him to distance himself from his victims and view them as 'other'; as objects rather than as people.

Donovan cites an actual instance of animal cruelty as the inspiration for his narrative and this revelation goes a long way towards answering some of the questions that arise from his novel, such as: How should the reader react to Julius Winsome's unlawful vigilantism as he sets about seeking justice for his murdered dog? Donovan states:

I knew the story because someone actually shot my neighbour's dog in real life and the dog had gone 500 yards and collapsed in the flowers, although the dog in real life survived. I was talking to myself afterwards and wondering what would I do if someone shot my dog, and the answer was that I would have killed them. (Bolger 14)

Donovan has Julius Winsome challenge the anthropocentric status quo when his character decides to avenge his dog's death and in a manner inconsistent with anthropocentric social expectations. Julius does not identify with the individual who writes "People are more important than dogs!!!" on the public notice he posts up to gather information about the

shooting (Donovan 68). He explicitly rejects anthropocentrism in this way and is presenting a countercultural understanding and experience of human-animal relations. Indeed, Julius has a history of showing concern for the welfare of animals, evident through a childhood memory when he single-handedly fought a group of boys who were torturing a domesticated cat. Thus, it seems, he recognises nonhuman animals are valuable individuals, sensitive social beings who have an interest in living a pleasurable, pain free life. Julius states this explicitly when he says, “Hobbes [was] taken from me, taken from his own life, his joy” (203). “He was my friend” he says, “and I loved him” (213). In his view, this is justification for seeking justice and enacting revenge.

Donovan shows how an intense human-canine bond centred on love and loyalty can inspire violence. The socially trivialised act of animal cruelty perpetrated against Hobbes incites a larger, more socially recognised form of violence against humans. The link between violence against animals and violence against humans is a crucial aspect of research into human-animal relationships because it shows that there is no such thing as trivial violence, or an unimportant victim of violence. *Julius Winsome*, which is clearly meant to be an uncomfortable novel to read, reflects the relationship between animal abuse and human violence which is now widely recognised (Gullone). Yet, Donovan achieves more than that and he highlights society’s paradoxical view of nonhuman animals by depicting the victimisation of a much maligned and socially stigmatised dog breed. In his interview with Bolger, Donovan states that the novelist’s task is “to admit things in public... [to] say what other people won’t say” (14). As he reflects on Julius’ reaction to Hobbes’ murder, and discusses how this character comes to rationalise taking human life as recompense for a dog’s life, Donovan explains, “It was an uncomfortable truth. Have I ever shot anyone? No. But in my mind I said if I could get away with it and I knew who had done it, I would probably kill

them” (Bolger 14). Of course, the most disconcerting aspect of Donovan’s novel is that Julius does *not* know who killed his dog and murders multiple hunters anyway.

The issue of breed stigmatisation and conflict over the social status of domesticated dogs also features in Nancy Kress’ novel, *Dogs*. The story is set in the fictional town of Tyler, wherein dogs kept as companions begin to attack – and in 36 instances – kill the humans with whom they live. Pit-bull terriers are just one of many dog breeds in Kress’ novel who transform from being benevolent to aggressive when they become infected with a pathogen as a result of an act of bioterrorism. While the plot of Kress’ novel seems extreme and unlikely, the premise is rooted in contemporary social anxieties. Whereas Donovan concentrates on the social stigma associated with one particular dog breed, Kress utilises the fear of domestic dog attacks in order to critique Western humanity’s paradoxical attitudes towards dogs more broadly.

The response of Tyler’s citizens to the dogs’ atypically aggressively behaviour provides insight into how dogs are valued by some and devalued by others in human society. Kress raises the stakes when instead of depicting these attacks as being committed by a particular or socially stigmatised breed, the first attack to appear in her novel is perpetrated by a sweet-natured eleven year-old golden retriever named Princess. More surprising than the attack being at odds with Princess’ characterisation as a gentle, elderly dog of a typically highly benevolent breed, is the revelation that the victim is a child called Jenny who is a member of Princess’ human family. The attack on Jenny is followed in quick succession by further reports of suburban domestic dog attacks in Tyler. It is clear that this is unprecedented when Animal Control Officer (ACO) Jess Langstrom states that he has never encountered “six bites within twelve hours in his own small jurisdiction” (Kress 8). What follows is a systematic division between the residents of Tyler; approximately half of whom think dogs

showing symptoms of infection should be killed and the other half who want the town's dogs to be protected and saved.

Princess' attack on Jenny is the first instance in which attitudes towards domesticated dogs are shown to move rapidly between dogs being viewed as subject or object, person or property. Although once a cherished and trusted companion to the Kingwell family, Princess' seemingly unprovoked attack on Jenny changes the family's attitudes towards her. Evidence of her change in status moving from subject to object arises when she is no longer called by her name. When Jess and his fellow ACO Billy Davis attend the Kingwell property to seize Princess after the attack, Daniel, the dog's human guardian, tells them, "You're too late...I shot the bitch" (Kress 9). When she was a benevolent family pet, Princess was called by her name; however, once she acts in an uncivilised, savage or 'animalistic' manner, she is stripped of her personal identity and becomes a detested object, denoted by the impersonal and pejorative term 'bitch'.

Language continues to feature as a mechanism by which the human characters in the novel depersonalise 'deviant' dogs. Despite the fact that his job requires him to work closely with animals, ACO Billy considers dogs to be little more than 'items' he must catch, deal with or dispose of. Billy rarely addresses a dog using his or her given name. For example, when a report comes in that a pet pit-bull named Duke has attacked two children, and one child remains trapped in the house with the dog, Billy and Jess attend the property. When Billy looks through the kitchen window, he sees Duke and says, "That bastard got blood on his jaws already" (Kress 21). After Billy shoots Duke in the head, he tells Jess to go home, saying "I can deal with Fang here alone – ain't like the son-of-a-bitch's going to attack anybody else. Right between the eyes. Damn, I'm good" (22). Clearly, Billy dislikes dogs, which enables him to detach himself from the fact this dog was named Duke, not 'bastard' or

‘Fang’ or ‘son-of-a bitch’, and at one time, Duke was a beloved canine companion who lived with a human family, as one of them.

The intersectionality of oppression arises in Kress’ novel through one character’s reductive comparison between certain dog breeds and human ethnicities. Cora Dormund and her husband Ed, guardians to three Siberian huskies, are neighbours to Del Lassiter who has a Chihuahua named Folly. When Del contacts the Dormunds to warn them about the dog plague, Cora, who is sceptical that such a thing exists, later says, “Some people will believe anything. Probably afraid that little Spic mutt of his will bite his finger” (Kress 49). The use of non-human animal associations as racial epithets and the association of certain kinds of nonhuman animals with people of certain ethnicity is a historically ubiquitous occurrence (Dunayer 161). In this passage, however, Cora projects her racist attitudes onto Folly by pejoratively calling the dog a ‘Spic mutt’, because, of course, the Chihuahua breed derives from Mexico. So Cora reduces Folly to a tool to insult Latin Americans which demonstrates how contempt for certain breeds of dog is often linked to racism towards humans. The aim of these epithets is to depersonalise a particular person or culture through the association to the already depersonalised nonhuman animal. Thus, as a result of Cora’s comment, Folly is viewed through a racist and speciesist lens to be doubly depersonalised.

Daniel Kingwell, Billy Davis and Cora Dormund are all characters in Kress’ novel who view domesticated dogs as objects rather than persons. There are, however, characters in the novel who oppose this view of dogs. Ex-FBI domestic counter-terrorism agent, Tessa Sanderson, guardian to toy poodle Minette, is one example. Another is young Allen Levy, whose family canine companion is a cocker spaniel named Susie. In contrast to the other dogs in the narrative who are treated like objects, Minette and Susie are portrayed as being unique, cherished individuals. Unlike the many depersonalised dogs, Minette and Susie are given

embellished descriptions; for example, Minette is described as an “elegant little bundle of silvery fur and huge black eyes” (Kress 23) and Susie is said to have “long silky ears” and a wagging tail (68). While depersonalised dogs feature in the narrative only when attacking someone, Minette is described as going about her daily activities, sleeping on Tessa’s bed, toileting, play fighting with Tessa and walking on a leash. Minette is considered worth saving when she is seized by the authorities and placed in a quarantine facility where vivisection to research the ‘dog plague’ occurs. ACO Jess, who is Tessa’s friend, swaps the labelling on Minette’s cage, preventing her from being earmarked as a “sacrifice for dissection” (127). Allen Levy maintains that his dog Susie is “not an ‘it!’” (221). When Allen learns that dogs are being seized by the authorities, he sedates Susie with Phenobarbital and hides her in the bottom draw of a filing cabinet in his home, which prevents her being seized by the authorities. Minette and Susie survive Tyler’s uncompromising response to the dog plague as a result of Tessa and Allen’s actions and attitudes: they love them and view them as persons, not property. Furthermore, as a result of their more personalised characterisation, readers are encouraged to identify with them as individuals and thus are more likely to care about their survival.

Ellie Caine, guardian to four rescued ex-racetrack Greyhounds named Song, Chimes, Music and Butterfly also views her dogs as persons. Ellie is already sympathetic to the objectification of dogs before the plague strikes because prior to adopting the dogs, they endured a severe form of exploitation as tools of the commercial Greyhound racing industry. Kress writes: “Dogs were trained to run by starving them and then forcing them to chase a piece of meat on a mechanical arm that moved faster and faster” (40). Dogs who do not perform are simply killed. Despite not supporting Greyhound racing herself, Ellie feels guilty for the way that humans have commercially objectified greyhounds for financial gain. Thus, upon hearing news of the dog plague, and realising that her dogs will be seized, destroyed or

vivisected, Ellie chooses to set them free. When Song and Butterfly later return to the house infected with the viral agent, they attempt to maul Ellie. Even then, she cannot suppress her perception of the dogs as precious individuals, “*her pets, her babies*” (161). When Butterfly is shot and killed, rather than feel relief or resentment towards her once beloved companion, she sobs hysterically, soon stops eating and sleeping, and suffers from depression.

Daniel, Billy and Cora view dogs as objects and Tessa, Allen and Ellie consider their companion animals to be subjects-of-a-life. These polarised attitudes towards dogs are represented more broadly in the novel because approximately half of the town demands that their dogs be preserved and protected while the remainder agree that they should be seized or captured and killed. The divide between those who want to protect dogs as if they are persons and those who consider dogs to be replaceable property is represented by two groups that form in response to the plague. After the authorities order that all dogs, whether infected or not, are to be caught and quarantined, a vigilante group led by Ed Dormund forms to oppose the seizure of asymptomatic dogs. They bomb a Stop’n’Shop store owned by the mayor’s son; an act which is met with accusations that they are irrational pet owners (Kress 177). Meanwhile, an antithetical vigilante group forms who threaten to kill all the town’s dogs themselves if the government does not do so. Thus, while the pro-dog faction says, “*Return all uninfected dogs to their owners within the next twenty-four hours, or this [bombing] will happen again*”, the anti-dog faction says, “*If you and the whole damn federal government can’t kill these vicious dogs, we’ll do it for you*” (223). These opposing factions aptly and succinctly reflect polarised attitudes relating to dogs who are viewed as subjects by some in Western culture and as objects by others.

Another dog who moves from being seen as a unique and valued individual to a disposable object features in Dan Rhodes’ novel, *Timoleon Vieta Come Home: A Sentimental*

Journey. Timoleon Vieta is the name given to a crossbreed dog who one rainy night, aged approximately two years, wanders into Carthusians Cockcroft's kitchen in Umbria, Italy. A retired man in his 60's, Cockcroft has a poor history of caring for canine companions across fifteen years. His first dog, a red setter, died of a drug reaction and he accidentally killed the second when, during an argument with an Austrian lover, he threw an ashtray which hit the Dalmatian's head fracturing the skull. The third dog, a Samoyed, unexplainably vanished four years prior to Timoleon Vieta's arrival. So when Timoleon Vieta wanders in he becomes "the centre of Cockcroft's world" (Rhodes 5) because Cockcroft is depicted as a lonely man who lives in social isolation and the presence of a canine companion makes his loneliness more bearable.

As a stray, Timoleon Vieta is a victim of societal abuse in the form of neglect before Cockcroft begins to care for him. In addition to those who are rescued, an untold number of domesticated dogs are born, live and die as strays in the Western world, without the sanctuary of human homes or shelters. Timoleon Vieta's origins are unknown. It is possible that he was either born a stray dog, or more likely, considering his affable and sociable disposition, he was abandoned by someone else prior to finding a home with Cockcroft. Either way, he is without a guardian. Timoleon Vieta's fate echoes the fates of many strays, who are abandoned and neglected in vast numbers for numerous reasons such as they become troublesome, too expensive, inconvenient or simply come to be viewed as tiresome.

For five years Timoleon Vieta resides with Cockcroft in the villa and is shown affection, given food and comfortable, safe lodgings. He is "unshakably loyal" to Cockcroft (Rhodes 5) and remains so even after Simon, a stranger in his mid-twenties pretending to be a Bosnian refugee, arrives unannounced at Cockcroft's home. Despite Timoleon Vieta's instant dislike of Simon, evident by a rumbling growl, Cockcroft welcomes Simon in. As Simon

moves to sit down, Rhodes writes that Timoleon Vieta “exploded with rage, his hackles raised and his barks piercing the still night air” (11). Timoleon Vieta’s intense aversion to Simon foreshadows a series of severe physical assaults perpetrated by ‘the Bosnian’ against this already once victimised animal.

Prior to Simon’s arrival, Timoleon Vieta is treated well by Cockcroft who cares for him and considers him a cherished companion. After Simon’s arrival, however, and over a number of weeks, the dog is increasingly treated like a thing. Cockcroft ignores Timoleon Vieta’s aversion to the stranger because Cockcroft finds Simon sexually attractive. The polarised feelings that the dog and his guardian have for Simon becomes clear in the passage where Rhodes explains how Timoleon Vieta sits with his “half-closed eyes” fixed on “the newcomer’s face” while Cockcroft inspects Simon’s “young, firm body” and fantasises about giving him “a lot of very close attention” (12). Simon is aware of Timoleon Vieta’s hostility towards him; nevertheless, he accepts Cockcroft’s offer of lodging. Rhodes writes: “The only things he didn’t like about the new home were the growling dog and the way of paying his rent”, which involves providing Cockcroft with sexual favours despite not being homosexual. It is Cockcroft’s obsession with keeping Simon at his home and in his life that leads to Timoleon Vieta’s subjection to severe physical abuse, rejection, abandonment and ultimately murder.

Simon exploits Cockcroft’s loneliness, his need to be needed and his desire to be desired, when he plots Timoleon Vieta’s disposal. Although he has lived with the dog as a companion, Cockcroft craves emotional and physical connection with another human being and Simon presents him with this opportunity. This situation exemplifies Yi-Fu Tuan’s argument that “pets exist for human pleasure and convenience. Fond as owners are of their animals, they do not hesitate to get rid of them when they prove inconvenient” (88).

Timoleon Vieta becomes inconvenient for Cockcroft because Simon does not want the dog around. Although Simon's physical abuse of the dog is upsetting for Cockcroft, the promise of a human relationship involving sexual intimacy changes the way he views and values his dog. As Cockcroft's desire for Simon's companionship increases, so does Simon's power over Cockcroft which extends to him having greater power over Timoleon Vieta. The men's sexual relationship is crucial in the narrative because sexual intimacy is something Cockcroft craves and which Simon can provide, so in this case, the ability to fulfil this role defines the difference between the value of the companionship offered by man and by dog.

Simon's vendetta against Timoleon Vieta takes shape as he slowly begins to drive a wedge between man and dog. The first time Simon abuses his power over Cockcroft and his dog arises during a dispute over who should take the front seat in Cockcroft's car. When Cockcroft offers to take Simon into town to acquire some new clothes, Cockcroft assumes Timoleon Vieta will accompany them because "he loves his trips into town" (Rhodes 26). Cockcroft says, "We go everywhere together, don't we Timoleon Vieta?" as his canine companion scratches at the car's passenger door. Since the vehicle is a pick-up, and there are only two seats in the front cab, Simon suggests that the dog travel on the tray back. When Cockcroft explains that back of the vehicle is not a comfortable place for Timoleon Vieta to ride, and suggests Simon ride in the back instead, Simon remarks, "He is dog, right? He is animal?" (26). Simon uses species as a way to disenfranchise and depreciate the dog. He is explicitly suggesting that the front seat is the superior position in the vehicle and as a human being he should be assigned the seat. Despite Timoleon Vieta's usually claiming the front seat, which he has sat in for many years, Simon argues that the rightful place for a dog is in the back of the pick-up and not the front seat because a dog is not a person. Timoleon Vieta retains the front seat on this occasion but his victory is temporary because Cockcroft promises Simon the dog will travel in the back in the future.

The consequences of being caught between subject and object worsens for Timoleon Vieta when the three next take a car trip and Simon claims the passenger seat. Timoleon Vieta is displeased with being supplanted and tied in the back. Rhodes writes, “Timoleon Vieta peered into the cab through the dirty back window, his whines escalating into snarls” (Rhodes 54). After a stroll around town, they all return to the car and Timoleon Vieta, likely out of habit, heads to the passenger door. As Cockcroft drags the dog to the back of the car, Simon, annoyed with the dog’s ‘complaining’, kicks him in the abdomen. Cockcroft is shocked and upset when his dog is harmed, but Simon explains, “I’m sick of his fucking crap. You treat him like a fucking baby. You should teach him to shut the fuck up” (57).

Simon’s power over Cockcroft escalates and the rift between Cockcroft and his dog deepens when the two men start taking car rides together leaving Timoleon Vieta home alone. The second major incident occurs one day when Cockcroft walks out of the house to inspect some maintenance work Simon has done. Timoleon Vieta follows his human companion and when Simon decides to pat the dog on the head, Timoleon Vieta bites him. Simon, once again, uses physical violence to demean and dominate Timoleon Vieta and kicks the dog in the head with his booted foot. This incident distresses Cockcroft who starts to contemplate life without Timoleon Vieta around. Meanwhile, Simon fantasises about killing the dog but reconsiders because “if he killed *it* and dumped *it* in the woods”, Cockcroft would be bereft (Rhodes 77 emphasis added). To illustrate the degree to which Simon depersonalises the dog, Timoleon Vieta is stripped of the personal pronoun ‘him’ – a common way in which human language delegitimizes nonhuman animals (Dunayer 149-56). Faced with the prospect of being left bereft of human company, Cockcroft agrees to consider Simon’s suggestion that they return Timoleon Vieta to live in the ‘wild’ (in this case an urban wilderness) and begin a “fresh start in life” (Rhodes 83), which is simply a euphemism for abandoning him. The two men drive Timoleon Vieta to Rome and dump him outside the

Coliseum. Through his cruel abandonment, Rhodes has Timoleon Vieta exemplify the 'disposability' of dogs kept as companions in Western culture. Indeed, he is a prototypical victim of what Clare Palmer terms an "attitude of instrumentalisation" (575); an attitude that makes it possible for people who feel inconvenienced by their pets' presence to simply abandon and dispose of them.

After Timoleon Vieta is abandoned, Rhodes' novel employs a series of vignettes in which the dog enters and exits the lives of numerous people. This technique draws on a common trope seen in dog narratives, which Laura Brown terms "itinerancy" (133). The itinerancy trope can be traced back to Eric Knight's novel *Lassie Come-Home* in which Sam CarracloUGH sells his prized Collie dog Lassie to a wealthy Duke but the dog repeatedly escapes to return to the CarracloUGH home. The Duke relocates Lassie from England to Scotland but Lassie escapes from the Scottish property and embarks on an arduous journey through moors, flatlands, farming districts, industrial centres and across rivers in order to return to her human companion, young Joe CarracloUGH. She is witnessed at different stages of her journey; first by two men sitting outside a cottage, by a weasel from who Lassie snatches a rabbit carcass, a landscape artist, two men hunting feral dogs, brutal animal control officers, a kind and compassionate elderly couple and finally a travelling potter. Similarly to Lassie, and despite his rejection and abandonment, Timoleon Vieta chooses to return home. Along this journey he encounters an Italian police-officer named Cosimo who pities Timoleon Vieta having witnessed him being dumped; an English girl visiting Italy who shares a chocolate bar with Timoleon Vieta; a father dealing with his daughter's progressive decline towards death, as well as others. Just as Lassie is renamed 'Herself' and 'Your Majesty' as she encounters different people, Timoleon Vieta is given various names including 'Abbondio'; 'Teg'; 'Dusty'; 'Giuseppe' and 'Leonardo Da Vinci'. The itinerancy trope extends to these dogs individuality and agency and shows how humans often treat dogs

like ‘blank canvases’ upon which we can write, erase, and rewrite upon. It also shows that through all their adversity, these canine characters maintain their history of experiences and a simple name change does not change who they are or erase what they have been through. Furthermore, they do not have to be witnessed or valued by humanity to be significant or to rightfully exist.

Hence, after many months and an arduous journey, Timoleon Vieta’s journey concludes on the track leading to Cockcroft’s house. Having followed Timoleon Vieta’s travels from the time he was dumped outside the Coliseum, and observed his interaction with the various people he met along the way, readers are invested in the dog’s success, which for Timoleon Vieta involves reunion with Cockcroft. Following the dog through this part of the story encourages readers to care about Timoleon Vieta and builds anticipation as the weary, loyal dog finally arrives at the laneway leading to his one-time loving home. Rhodes, however, shocks the reader with an unexpected ending to this promised ‘sentimental journey’ when Simon, who is leaving Cockcroft’s home at the time, meets Timoleon Vieta on his way out, lifts the dog up by the scruff and then slits his throat. Rhodes writes:

The dog made a choking sound, twitched, and fell still. The Bosnian dropped Timoleon Vieta on the ground. ‘I am from Bosnia,’ he said, kicking and stamping on the dog’s head and neck. ‘I kill the dogs.’...The dog lay dead on its side, one of its eyes facing upwards as though it could see the sky. Noticing this, the Bosnian jabbed his knife into the eyeball over and over again, until it was a mess and no longer looked as though it could see the sky. (212)

Erica Fudge states Rhodes’ narrative “mocks our desire for Lassie endings” (37). However, while credited as being the most sentimental of all dog narratives, *Lassie* is, in reality, also a story about an animal regarded as disposable property. The catalyst for her journey home is

the fact she is sold by the Carraclooughs so that the money she fetches can pay some bills.

While the ‘loyal dog makes a return journey’ feature of Lassie and Timoleon Vieta’s stories resonates, their endings are converse. Lassie’s is a happy ending as she is allowed to stay where she most desires whereas Timoleon Vieta goes from being Cockcroft’s cherished companion and genuine friend to being repeatedly assaulted, abandoned, mutilated and brutally killed.

A significant aspect of Timoleon Vieta’s murder is the mutilation of the dog’s eye. The eyes are often thought to be the windows to the soul, which is a common cultural cliché deriving from the Latin proverb *oculus animi index*, meaning “the eye is the soul’s window/mirror” (Rauthmann et al 147 foot note). By mutilating the dog’s eye, Simon enacts the ultimate and complete annihilation of Timoleon Vieta as a person and as a subject. Another way to read the stabbing of Timoleon Vieta’s ‘witnessing eye’ – an eye that even post mortem has the ability to enrage Simon – relates to the power of the animal gaze. In his 2011 essay, “The Gaze of Animals”, Philip Armstrong provides a historical account of the ways in which the animal gaze appears in narratives stemming from the early days of myth, to post-enlightenment, through to postmodernity. He writes: “The human experience of discomfiture before the gaze of other animals has a long genealogy. For many centuries the eyes of animals were thought to emit a physical force, an irradiation with the power to transfix or infect those who encountered it” (Armstrong “The Gaze” 178). This fear of the animal’s gaze is linked to mysticism and superstition as well as to humans’ anxieties regarding their control over other animals. However, it is “the attack against the animal gaze” that resonates here because, like Rhodes, authors have historically incorporated depictions of mutilations of the animal eye in their fictions (Armstrong “The Gaze” 184). Rhodes detailing of Simon’s mutilation of the dead dog’s eye suggests that Timoleon Vieta’s gaze reminds his killer that the dog never respected or trusted him. In defiance of the perceived power emitted

by the animal gaze and in ways that reinforce humans' mastery over nature using weapons and violence, Timoleon Vieta's eye and its accusation are silenced.

Ketchum, Donovan, Kress and Rhodes each incorporate depictions of animal cruelty in the forms of violence and neglect in their novels in order to raise questions about the perception and positioning of dogs in Western society. Ketchum creates tension in his novel that arises as a consequence of conflicting attitudes regarding the status and value of nonhuman animals. By centring his novel on the wanton killing of a gentle elderly dog, and having the perpetrator of this crime a victim of his father's abuse as well as a victimiser of others, Ketchum connects animal cruelty to a wider cultural issue involving the abuse of power. In drawing attention to Western legal discourse, which classifies nonhuman animals as objects and property, Ketchum is able to challenge the status quo by having select characters in the novel reject this classification and argue that the system is flawed because, as Avery's father claims, blood is blood.

Donovan's novel is also shaped by social issues relating to power and violence, particularly the link between violence against animals and violence against humans. By having a hunter murder Hobbes, a person stereotypically thought to view nonhuman animals as objects – as 'prey', 'quarry' or 'game' – Donovan raises questions about violence towards animals. He complicates the assumption that a dog's life is worthless by depicting Hobbes in a way that affords him subjectivity. He presents Hobbes as a friendly, benevolent individual which, in addition to extending him subjectivity, questions the problem of breed stigmatisation. In choosing to depict Hobbes as a pit bull, a breed widely demonised in Western culture, Donovan subverts the assumption that pit bulls are evil dogs. Donovan has Julius dispassionately shoot random hunters in the same manner that Hobbes' killer dispassionately shoots nonhuman animals and he uses language as a way to alienate and

‘other’ the human victims, which reflects the way humans use language to disenfranchise nonhuman animals.

In *Dogs*, Kress employs a dog plague that dramatically alters domesticated dogs’ typically acquiescent temperaments so that family pets metamorphose into savage, unpredictable enemies of humankind. The transition from subject to object is established when beloved dogs once called by their given names are, when infected, referred to using pejoratives such as bitch and bastard. Kress further establishes the dogs’ shift in status from subject to object by revealing oppositional opinions about dogs that existed even prior to the plague striking. For example, she has an Animal Control Officer describe dogs as ‘things’ to be captured and dealt with, which contrasts with her portrayal of Minette and Susie who, by being represented as having desires and as enjoying daily pleasures, are given subjectivity. The polarisation of the town into opposing vigilante groups, one pro-dog and the other anti-dog, enables Kress to succinctly and effectively capture, as well as raise questions about, the polarised status of dogs as either objects/property or subjects/persons as it exists in Western culture.

Rhodes makes the transition from subject to object more personal and poignant in his novel by centring his narrative on the trials and tribulations of just one repeatedly victimised dog. Unlike most of the dogs in the other novels featured in this chapter, Timoleon Vieta is already a victim of Western cultural attitudes that undervalue the lives of dogs because before finding Cockcroft he is an urban stray. By providing this back story, Rhodes encourages the reader to immediately rejoice in the dog’s happy newfound life with Cockcroft. But then disrupts this seemingly wonderful relationship between a man and his loyal dog by introducing Simon, a man who exploits Cockcroft and happens to dislike dogs. Timoleon Vieta, thus, becomes situated between Cockcroft, who loves him like a person, and Simon,

who views and treats him like an object. Rhodes is able to use the dog's positioning between these two men as a way to highlight the disposability of dogs in Western culture after Simon convinces Cockcroft to abandon his dog. Rhodes' mockery of the Lassien ending resonates as a powerful testament to the fragility and fickleness of the human-canine bond.

Chapter Three

The Canine Companion as a Dual Device

As my discussion so far has shown, dog narratives are fertile ground for examining how domesticated dogs are categorised as inferior to human beings based on qualities they are perceived to lack, such as capacity for language and personhood. Yet it is also clear that some dog narratives can, by various means, challenge and transcend these reductive ideologies. In performing a canine-centric critique of certain novels, a further ambivalence emerges concerning the way novelists engage with the ways that dogs are ubiquitously classified according to the roles they fulfil in Western culture.

Hal Herzog summarises some of the roles that dogs perform in Western culture as follows: “[They] locate kids and rotting cadavers, warn deaf owners when the smoke alarm goes off, and lead the blind through the city streets”, they partake in “hunting and herding” and “sniff out bombs, dope and bladder cancer” (111). Furthermore, in the course of fulfilling these, and numerous other social service roles, dogs attract various labels such as ‘sheepdog’, ‘rescue dog’, ‘sled dog’, ‘guard dog’, ‘guide dog’, ‘sniffer dog’, ‘hunting dog’, ‘laboratory dog’, ‘war dog’, ‘therapy dog’, ‘police dog’ and, of course, ‘pet’ or ‘companion’.

Dogs also perform many specific functions in literature, a tradition that has captured the attention of many literary animal studies scholars. For example, Kate Soper argues that nonhuman animals “never appear in literature simply as themselves”; rather, she claims they are always functioning as descriptive narrative devices, symbols or allegory (303).

Discussing Claude Levi-Strauss’ statement “animals are good to think with”, Soper captures the appeal of using animals as devices when she writes, “In animals we discover our own most loathsome and most laudable qualities, projecting on to them both that with which we most closely identify, and that which we are most keen to be distanced from” (307). Dogs

work particularly well in this capacity because their species-specific traits are easily adapted to function as symbols, metaphors, allegories, totems or metonyms. This is because dogs are similar to humans in many ways: they enjoy human company and seem to exhibit recognisable and familiar emotions, and so they are easily anthropomorphised. To this end, canine characters often appear in fiction not as themselves but as literary instruments, and such depictions tend to teach us very little about actual dogs.

Lynda Birke notes: “Within Western cultural traditions, there is a long history of domination and of perceiving other animals as there solely for our use” (Taylor and Signal xviii). Indeed, the designation of any role to a dog is problematic from a Critical Animal Studies perspective because the obligations and expectations placed upon the animal forges him or her into a tool for human purposes, however else he or she may also be perceived. The conflation of utilisation and domination means that there is no way to assign socio-cultural roles to animals such as dogs – either in fiction or in reality – without necessarily imposing upon the individual some degree of human control in the process. Whether the role is social or literary, labelling and categorising imposes certain traits and characteristics onto the nonhuman animal and too often prevents us from recognising the animal beneath. As a literary device, the dog becomes a means to an anthropocentric end, which constitutes a “reductive and disrespectful” misappropriation (Shapiro and Copeland 344), just as in carrying out a social service, whereby the dog is subjugated and becomes a mechanism when manipulated to perform a human-designated occupation.

Since the dogs depicted in the four novels selected for this chapter are categorised as ‘companions’ it is this double-layered role – simultaneously as social support and as literary mechanism – that will provide the foundation of my analysis. In what follows, I show how canine characters act as devices to support and advance the human protagonist’s journey in

Dean Koontz's *Watchers* (1987), Jack Ketchum's *Red* (1995), Paul Auster's *Timbuktu* (1999) and David Wroblewski's *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* (2008). Yet while both literary representations and social utilisations of dogs can be observed as reductive and limiting, my aim is to demonstrate how some authors of dog narratives challenge and transcend both kinds of instrumentalism, instead encouraging us to recognise dogs as multifaceted beings who defy cultural categorisation. Specifically, I argue that where Koontz fails, Ketchum, Auster and Wroblewski find effective ways to move their canine protagonists beyond both their literal and literary classifications and present them as being individuals in possession of subjectivity and a distinct canine identity.

As the previous chapters have made clear, authors of dog narratives consider the canine companion to be a great asset to facilitate the telling of human stories. However, while dogs feature prolifically in fictional narratives as a means to an anthropocentric end, when read from a canine-centric perspective, these narratives can tell us a great deal about our tendency to construct, control and classify the 'canine companion'. Hal Herzog states, "The language that we use to talk about animals...affects how we think about animals" and this is connected to "the categories we put them in" (46). The term 'companion animal' is a category that seemingly privileges certain animal species such as dogs, yet it is also highly problematic. Adopting a Critical Animal Studies perspective, Joan Dunayer explains that the label "turns 'companion' into a trait, something inseparable from a nonhuman's being, [it] obliges certain nonhuman animals to be (and remain) some human's companion...it restricts *animal* to nonhumans" (204 original emphasis). Viewed in this way, the title 'companion' when applied to a nonhuman animal or animal species is just another way in which humans use language to subjugate, shape and manipulate.

In addition to attracting the label ‘companion’, the dogs depicted in the four novels featured in this chapter specifically provide companionship to lonely socially isolated human beings who, for one reason or another, are estranged from humankind. For this reason, I begin by outlining one rather divisive motivation often cited as a reason for why some humans might invite dogs into their lives. The suggestion is that a dog’s companionship substitutes for what would otherwise be more ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ relationships with fellow human beings. The claim that the role of companion is simply another way that humans make use of, or instrumentalise, dogs has been made by many. Plutarch, two thousand years ago, was one of the first to suggest that companion animals were recipients of affection that should rather be directed towards other humans (Serpell 24). This position has been repeated often, right through to recent times, perhaps most notably by Yi-Fu Tuan in his 1984 text *Dominance and Affection*. Another example is John Berger, who in his 1980 essay “Why Look at Animals?” states that the pet’s dependence and susceptibility to conditioning satisfies the human need to feel complete; they confirm and validate us (12-13). He proposes that “...animals offer man a companionship which is different from any offered by human exchange. Different because it is a companionship offered to the loneliness of man as a species” (4). Berger frames companion species as social and psychological devices and as tools useful to remedy the loneliness humankind feels as a result of being disconnected from the rest of the animal kingdom; or in other words, the relationships humans forge with domesticated (and other captive) animals appeases our insecurities as well as our intense feelings of disconnection from nature (24).

Others, such as Jonathan Burt, who responds to Berger’s essay by arguing that human-animal relationships are not “monuments to disappearance” but rather are “a different sort of relationship entirely”, challenge the reduction of the human-companion animal bond to a social or psychological dysfunction (211). Similarly, Leslie Irvine criticises what she

calls 'The Deficiency Argument' and rejects the suggestion that animals are surrogates for humans. She labels this claim sensationalist and flawed (19), and says that to imply humans' relationships with companion animals serve primarily to substitute for otherwise 'normal' human relationships "assumes that people who enjoy the company of animals lack the qualities or skills that would allow them to enjoy human company" (18). Based on the depictions of the human-canine relationships in the novels in this chapter, dogs certainly do appear to be surrogates or human substitutes in the fictional worlds that they inhabit; however, in three of the four novels to be discussed here, there is also evidence to suggest that this appointment is not necessarily limited or limiting.

At the same time as analysing a few of the ways in which some authors challenge the reductive cultural categorisation of dogs, it is necessary also to outline the extent to which, and the ways in which, portrayals of co-dependent human-canine relationships incorporate the canine character as a literary, social or psychological device. The manner and degree of instrumentalisation of dogs varies in the selected novels. In *Watchers*, for example, the dog, Einstein, fulfils Travis Cornell's desire to be needed and Red, the dog in Ketchum's novel, provides Avery Ludlow with emotional support after the loss of his wife and son. Both dogs are catalysts that facilitate the human-centric plot involving Travis' romantic relationship with Nora Devon in *Watchers*, and Avery's reconnection with his daughter and society in *Red*. Point-of-view focalising characters like Mr. Bones in *Timbuktu* and Almondine in *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* enable the reader to discover things about the human characters via the dogs' perception of them. Mr. Bones offers intimacy and social support to his socially stigmatised human guardian and Sawtelle dog Almondine is an unconventional sibling to Wroblewski's mute eponymous character, Edgar Sawtelle.

In *Watchers*, Travis Cornell is characterised as a deeply depressed and lonely man who is ‘celebrating’ his 36th birthday the day that he encounters the genetically engineered golden retriever in the forest. In contrast to typical birthday celebrations, involving parties, gifts, cakes, friends and family, on this day he rises at 5am, dresses in hiking gear and drives from Santiago to a rural canyon on the outskirts of Los Angeles to sit alone in the woods. His depressed state of mind is evident as Koontz writes, “During the two-and-a-half hour trip, he never switched on the radio. He never hummed, whistled or sang to himself as men alone often do...[he] did not once glance appreciatively at the sun-sequined water” (3). The extent of Travis’ trauma and loneliness is clear as he is described as a man who had experienced “his share of suffering” and whose smile “had once charmed women, though not recently”; thus, he is a man who “had not smiled in a long time” (Koontz 4). His sadness is coupled with anxiety as Koontz writes, “Lately, alternately depressed and angered by the loneliness and sheer pointlessness of his life, he had been wound as tight as a crossbow string” (6). As Travis reflects on his long term struggles to maintain friendships it is revealed that he avoids human intimacy because he thinks he is cursed as a result of his mother’s death during childbirth, his older brother’s childhood drowning and because he survived a car accident that killed his father (85-6). As a result of these familial tragedies, he has lost “the ability to form and nurture intimate relationships” and has become “emotionally isolated” (87). So it is at a time when Travis is craving connection with another living being that the dog enters the clearing and Travis’ life.

In the passage in which Travis and Einstein meet, Koontz draws on the fabled Collie dog Lassie from *Lassie Come-Home* to signify an act of salvation is taking place. Susan McHugh calls Lassie a ‘super dog’: “Physically strong and beautiful, emotionally available and tactful, Lassie also tutors people she encounters; in addition to saving their lives...” (109). Travis does not initially know that he is being saved because he struggles to interpret

Einstein's behaviour, which is motivated by the approach of *The Outsider*, a deadly trans-genetic animal. To communicate the warning (as discussed in Chapter One), Einstein growls, snarls, wags his tail and paces back and forth, which prompts Travis to call him a "freelance Lassie" (Koontz 12). In the Lassie film and television franchise, Lassie is always a conscientious helper who paces, whimpers and barks, amongst other things, to communicate urgent, often life-saving information to human beings. Lassie's ability to sense danger and communicate with people enables her to help save lives; similarly, in *Watchers*, Einstein is a 'super dog' whose genetic engineering for heightened understanding of human language allows him to warn Travis of the danger and ultimately save his life.

Einstein literally saves Travis from being killed by *The Outsider* but there is a far greater, less obvious rescue taking place; the dog saves Travis from social and emotional exile. He does this by becoming Travis' friend, by offering companionship, and he also fulfils Travis' yearning to be needed. This is evident in the passage where Travis takes the dog home, bathes him and decides to put a collar on him. When the collar is presented, Einstein growls and cowers in the corner. When he eventually yields to wearing a collar, Koontz writes:

Travis felt a lump in his throat and was aware of hot tears scalding the corner of his eyes...he knew why the dog's considered submission affected him so strongly. For the first time in three years, Travis Cornell felt needed, felt a deep connection with another living creature. (56)

Prior to meeting Einstein, Travis' wife Paula has succumbed to cancer, leaving him a widower. The reader is aware that, since Paula would have needed Travis' support during her illness, for Travis, being needed is likely to constitute a powerful emotional connection.

Einstein's suitability to appeasing Travis' desire to be needed is transient as Koontz soon has the canine character act as a social catalyst when he facilitates a meeting between Travis and his future wife Nora Devon. Nora is a withdrawn, socially awkward 30-year-old woman who lives alone. Since becoming the focus of a sexual predator named Art Streck, her need for protection is equal to if not greater than Einstein's need to be protected from those who are hunting him – that is, The Outsider and also the staff from Banodyne Laboratory where he was a captive laboratory animal. Streck accosts Nora in a public park when Travis happens to be walking Einstein nearby. Sensing Streck's intentions, Einstein defies Travis' recall command and confronts Streck by growling and barking. Once Streck leaves the scene, Travis looks over to see that Einstein "had settled down on his belly with his head on the woman's lap" (Koontz 122). Hence, in this instance, Einstein acts as a "social lubricant", a term used by Herzog (68) to denote the way pets facilitate social interaction between people, in this case antisocial Travis and shy, isolated Nora. People who care for nonhuman animals are often perceived in social circumstances as "nicer" and "less threatening" (Veevers 16); hence, it can be inferred that Nora trusts Travis at a time when men seem especially threatening to her because Einstein is with him.

Einstein is crucial to the connection of two socially and emotionally isolated human individuals and Travis and Nora's shared connection with Einstein enables them to overcome their problems with forming human relationships and find companionship with each other. For Koontz as a writer, the canine character fulfils a literary or plot function: he facilitates the meeting between Travis and Nora whose relationship is the novel's principal focus. The dog's appearance and his ongoing presence in the narrative enable Travis to transform from social outcast to husband, father and devoted family man, and Nora from a shy, withdrawn single woman to confident wife and mother. Einstein's involvement with Travis and Nora works out well for him because although his task as Travis' saviour and as social catalyst is

temporary, when Travis and Nora learn that they are expecting a child, Einstein is invited to remain with them as a member of their human family. Not all the dogs chosen for this study fare so well.

Einstein is a flat or two-dimensional character, which means that he “is built around ‘a single idea or quality’ and is presented without much individualizing detail” (Abrams and Harpham 43). As a result of being able to produce human speech, Einstein is heavily anthropomorphised; thus, his desires become decidedly anthropocentric, which undermines any attempt to present him with any qualities relating to canine subjectivity that might be useful in our understanding of the dreams and desires of actual dogs. Apart from a few expected likes and dislikes, such as an aversion to being vaccinated (353) and delight in playing with other dogs (362), Einstein asks to drink beer (420) and snack on hamburgers and weenies (438); furthermore, he gains pleasure from reading novels (366) and playing Scrabble (495). He does tell Travis that he dreams (456), which would indicate a complex mind, but there is no exposition as to what these dreams typically involve. As a result, such characterising details seem more concerned with humanising him (as a way to exceptionalise him), and as a result, he is not extended any significant degree of canine subjectivity or bestowed a unique canine identity.

Furthermore, unlike the dogs in the novels to follow, Einstein seems valued less for his personal qualities than for what he represents in terms of scientific importance. His possible death from the disease canine distemper is viewed more as a tragedy for modern science than as a personal tragedy. As Einstein fights the disease, Travis considers what it might mean should the dog die. Koontz writes, “And what other loss could be more devastating than the loss of Einstein, this first hopeful evidence that humankind carried with it the seeds not merely of greatness but of godhood?” (518). When the vet explains that the

encephalitis Einstein suffers may leave him brain damaged, but emphasises that this does not necessarily mean he cannot be a good pet, Travis shouts, “To hell with whether he’d make a good pet or not. I’m not concerned about *physical* effects on the brain damage. What about his *mind*?” (507 original emphasis). Then when warned of long-term consequences of the brain damage, such as incontinence, Travis adds, “I don’t give a damn if he pisses all over the house as long as he can still *think*!” (508). Travis’ concerns for Einstein centre on the dog’s retention of the trait that Travis, as a human being, values most: cognition, which in this novel means the dog’s ability to produce human language. Rather than view Einstein’s death as a tragedy in and of itself, Travis focuses on what Einstein’s death might mean for modern science and, more generally, the triumph of humankind.

Einstein expresses one significant desire towards the end of the novel that is swiftly superseded by his commoditisation. Despite the companionship offered by Travis and Nora, Einstein feels lonely and decides that he would like a female dog in his life. Upon learning this, Koontz immediately has Travis contemplate the potential benefits of breeding Einstein because there is a fair chance he will produce extraordinarily intelligent offspring, or as Koontz writes, “a colony of intelligent golden retrievers, thousands of them all over the world” (553). As a result of Travis’ response to Einstein’s request, what could have evolved to be an example of complex canine subjectivity is superseded by Travis’ instrumentalisation of Einstein as a tool useful to produce more dogs who would, presumably, be born intellectually gifted like their father.

Einstein’s flat characterisation becomes more evident when he is compared to other dogs in dog narratives, such as Mr. Bones from *Timbuktu*. Like Einstein, Mr. Bones is the sole companion to a troubled man who needs him and in this capacity he facilitates the exposition of a human-centric story; yet, Mr. Bones is a rounded character, which means

“complex in temperament and motivation and...represented with subtle particularity”

(Abrams and Harpham 43). Unlike Koontz, Auster presents the dog's journey in his novel as equal in value to the human protagonist's journey. Since the story unfolds from the dog's point of view, as in Stein's *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, the reader gains access to the dog's personal experiences, memories, thoughts, desires and motivations. As a result, Mr. Bones' characterisation undermines his utility as a narrative tool or a canine companion and portrays him as possessing a unique canine identity.

Timbuktu is concerned with issues relating to human social exclusion and to that end Mr. Bones is useful for the exploration of this motif. From the outset, Auster's story is narrated through Mr. Bones' consciousness; although, at the start, the story is centred on the dog's human companion, Willy G. Christmas. Willy is a lonely, unemployed, unwell, homeless poet, aged in his late forties, who suffers from schizophrenia. He is also a social outcast. After his father's death, which occurs when Willy is aged twelve, he embarks on a path of substance abuse, which exacerbates his symptoms of schizophrenia. Hallucinations lead him to spend some time in a mental illness treatment facility and, ultimately, his problems force him out of his mother's home and onto the street. Drug use, mental illness, low socio-economic status and homelessness are all factors that often result in social and cultural victimisation (Hart et al 1582) and Willy suffers not from one, but all of these conditions. After his mother dies, Willy, now middle-aged, is left without any immediate family to provide him with financial, emotional or psychological support. He is estranged from human society, unemployed and bereft of family and friends. Hence, he is left with only one source of support and companionship: his dog, Mr. Bones.

Auster's novel invites the reader to compare Willy and Mr. Bones as they wander the streets of Baltimore together. In obvious ways, Willy and Mr. Bones are similar because they

face the same challenges. In the first instance, as Wendy Woodward observes, the two characters are similarly “physically challenged by disease and poverty” (26). Owing to their circumstances, they are overlooked and dismissed by society, have insufficient food, shelter and health care and endure a difficult and degrading existence on the streets. Both attract negative labels. Terms such as ‘homeless’, ‘insane’, ‘unemployed’ and ‘outcast’ are descriptions that alienate people like Willy and Auster seems particularly interested in addressing the ways that sufferers of mental disorders are stigmatised resulting in what psychologists term social “devaluation and rejection” (Martinez et al 2). Willy’s situation reflects social reality whereby those with differences such as mental illness are often demoted to a “devalued social category” and may be “animalistically dehumanized...[or] rendered animal-like in terms of lacking such uniquely human qualities of constraint, complex emotional capacities, and refinement” (Martinez et al 3). The devaluation, rejection, animalisation and dehumanisation that Willy suffers as a result of the labels society imposes on him renders him more like Mr. Bones, who happens to be a member of a disenfranchised and less venerated species.

Just as negative labels work to stigmatise Willy, they also alter the social perception of certain groups of dogs in Western culture. Terms used to describe cross-breed dogs like Mr. Bones, such as ‘mutt’ and the synonym ‘mongrel’, are contrasted with the more regal terms ‘pedigree’ and ‘pure breed’. Discussing Victorian attitudes to dogs, Nik Taylor explains, “Purebred dogs were something to be cherished, displaying as they did their owners’ status, while mongrels were associated with commonness and commonality and were therefore to be avoided at all costs” (47-8). Mr. Bones’ pre-existing identity issue as a result of being a cross-breed is exacerbated by the death of his human companion and caregiver because the consequences of his ancestry, once left without a human carer, are compounded. Willy, prior to his death, establishes the importance of pedigree for social acceptability when

he explains to Mr. Bones that pure or recognisable dog breeds are more appealing to humans. So Mr. Bones believes that as a “hodgepodge of genetic strains” he is fundamentally undesirable (Auster 5). Furthermore, Mr. Bones suspects he has an additional handicap because of his filthy, matted coat, dental decay and sad bloodshot eyes. He knows that because of his mixed ancestry and motley appearance, his chances of being adopted from an animal shelter after Willy dies are extremely poor.

Like his canine companion, Willy also has issues involving his sense of identity, which leads him to attract even more labels. Through Mr. Bones’ memories of the rambling stories that Willy has told him, we learn that Willy’s outcast status began when he was a child in Brooklyn. An only son of poor long-suffering polish immigrants, Willy’s childhood is described as cheerless as a result of living in an apartment “tinged with sourness and desperation” (Auster 13). Identifying as an American while growing up, Willy feels estranged from his parents and considers them to be “alien”, “embarrassing” and “foreign” (14). Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that the term mongrel, has long been used as a pejorative to describe a “person of mixed descent; a person whose parents are of different nationalities; a person whose parents are of differing social status...[or a] person of low or indeterminate status” (“mongrel”). Thus, like Mr. Bones, Willy feels as if he is genetically disadvantaged and, like Mr. Bones, his mixed heritage places him in a cultural category that is sometimes viewed by society as inferior.

The result of being persecuted on the basis of identity arises more forcefully in the novel through Auster’s analogy between the fates of stray dogs and the fates of Jews who were victims of the Holocaust.¹⁶ On the run after Willy’s death, Mr. Bones knows that he must avoid being captured by animal control because his identity as a ‘stray’ means that if

¹⁶ Parallels between the treatment and fate of Jews during the Holocaust and the treatment and fate of nonhuman animals is well represented in the realm of Animal Studies just as it is in fiction. See Patterson’s *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*, 2002 and J. M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals*, 1999.

caught, he will be locked up at a shelter and will most likely be exterminated there. Auster writes, “Mr. Bones knew the drill by heart: how to avoid the dog catchers and constables, the paddy wagons and unmarked cars...No matter how sweetly they talked to you, the word *shelter* meant trouble” (5 original emphasis). Free-roaming strays are the least desired dogs in society and as a result of having no one specific to care about them. They are sought out, captured, incarcerated and generally terminated. In this capacity, they are analogous to Jews who were deemed “undesirable” and “relegated to the status of ‘vermin’ throughout history in order to justify their extermination” (Serpell 229). While Jews were killed in carbon monoxide chambers using a method called ‘gassing’ (Arluke 123), dogs in shelters are typically killed using lethal injection today, however gassing is still used as a method for canicide.¹⁷ Nazi concentration camps where Jews were incarcerated and the dog shelters of urban landscapes are, therefore, similarly sites of capture and death.

Auster reinforces the parallel between Mr. Bones’ predicament and that of the Jewish people during Hitler’s reign in the passage in which Willy posthumously addresses his dog in a dream. In the dream, Willy brings up his mother’s successful evasion of the Nazis when he says, “Remember *Mom-san*, Mr. Bones?...Well, they tried to kill her too. They hunted her down like a dog and she had to run for her life” (Auster 120). Like Willy’s mother, if captured, Mr. Bones knows he will be taken to a concrete shelter, a place reminiscent of concentration camps of the Holocaust. Willy tells Mr. Bones that “the word *shelter* meant trouble. It would begin with nets and tranquillizer guns, devolve into a nightmare of cages and fluorescent lights, and end with a lethal injection or a dose of poisonous gas” (5 original emphasis). This sequence, as Woodward observes, reflects the genocide of Jewish people, and this model of extermination, she argues, “recalls the Final Solution” (33). While the term ‘Final Solution’ referred to the genocide of the Jewish people, in Western culture, where dogs

¹⁷ As well as widely used to kill animals raised in industrialised food production industries.

are concerned, the official term use to denote the extermination of 'unwanted' dogs is 'humane euthanasia'. By drawing a parallel between Mr. Bones' predicament as a stray dog and the treatment of Jewish people during the Holocaust, Auster emphasises not only the gravity of the socially 'undesirable' dog's plight but he compounds the extent of Mr. Bones' victimisation at the hands of a culture who depersonalises dogs in order to justify destroying them. As a result, the reader further empathises with Mr. Bones and desires for him a much more positive outcome.

Woodward highlights the many parallels drawn between Willy and Mr. Bones in *Timbuktu*, and suggests that these parallels reflect the novel's concerns with "connections and vulnerabilities", and ideas about the "shared vulnerability" of humans and animals" (28); yet, Woodward, like Auster, does not privilege the exploration of human vulnerabilities over nonhuman ones. In one sense, Willy reflects the devaluation and dehumanisation suffered by those in the world who are like him while Mr. Bones embodies the plight of unwelcome free-roaming dogs who face similar issues to the homeless human being. Yet, Auster's novel can either be read as a narrative about human social exclusion told through the experience of a stray dog or it can be considered a novel about the social exclusion of stray dogs told through a story about a human. In the former instance, the dog is used as a means to an anthropocentric end and in the latter instance the man is a means to a canine-centric end, or perhaps more correctly, both are devices and it is the way in which the novel is read that changes the object of instrumentality. In this way, Mr. Bones' function goes well beyond that of Einstein in *Watchers*.

There is one further way in which Auster's novel, whether intentionally or not, provides a fuller and more ambivalent representation of dogs' role as 'companions'. After walking through the city streets in the wake of Willy's death, Mr. Bones encounters Henry

Chow, a lonely schoolboy. Henry, like Willy, is socially isolated but instead of suffering from schizophrenia and homelessness, he is identified as “an only child whose parents worked long hours” (Auster 100) and Auster describes him as “a solitary child, a boy who was used to being alone and living in his thoughts” (105). His sense of alienation is likely exacerbated because, like Willy and Mr. Bones, Henry’s ontological identity is destabilised, in this case because he is a Chinese boy residing in America. Just as Mr. Bones functions as a sounding board for Willy in life, “a man in love with his own voice” who talks to his dog constantly (6), he also serves as a sounding board for the “smallest, most ephemeral musings that flitted through...[Henry’s] eleven-year-old brain” (105). Henry and Willy take advantage of Mr. Bones as an obligatory listener because neither man nor boy has anyone they feel they can talk to. Just as Berger argues our interest in other animals is self-serving, in Auster’s novel, Mr. Bones completes, confirms and validates these people. He fills the void of loneliness and remedies Henry’s intense feelings of interpersonal disconnection. Furthermore, in a way that reflects precisely the point made by Dunayer discussed above, ‘companion’ becomes Mr. Bones’ defining trait and is something inseparable from his nonhuman being. He feels obliged to be and remain some human’s companion, which essentially restricts and depreciates him.

Dunayer goes further than determining the term ‘companion animal’ to be reductive; she claims it is potentially dangerous because “such an animal has no place... if they aren’t some human’s companion or their companionship fails to please” and, as a result, “they can be abandoned or killed” (8). Indeed, this is reflected in *Timbuktu* through Auster’s depiction of the potential consequences of Mr. Bones’ cultural categorisation. As a domesticated dog bred to provide humans with companionship, Mr. Bones cannot fathom a life that is not based upon interspecies co-dependence. He is so dependent upon Willy that he suffers from what Edward Stourton, author of *Diary of a Dog-Walker*, calls “canine monomania” (115),

meaning that he is fixated on his human companion and feels defined by this relationship. Mr. Bones proclaims that it is “next to impossible for him to imagine a world that did not have his master in it”; indeed, “pure ontological terror” is evoked when he tries to conceive of his world without Willy and he believes that when Willy dies, “the odds were that the world itself would cease to exist” (Auster 4). Without a human to care for him, Mr. Bones believes he has only two options: either continue to live as a stray and risk being captured, confined and eventually exterminated or give up on living altogether. Of the former option, Auster writes, “Mr. Bones had run into homeless dogs in the past, but he had never felt anything but pity for them – pity and a touch of disdain” (88). He fears the “loneliness of their lives was too brutal to contemplate” and avoids these “abject creatures” because of the “ticks and fleas hidden in their fur”, and for fear “the diseases and desperation they carried would rub off on him” (89), and his fear of the dog shelter is clear. Notably, even Mr. Bones perpetrates a kind of exclusion whereby some dogs, the ones he considers to be ‘true’ strays, are undesirable to him. Thus, his aversion to being an outcast leads him to select the latter option, and he chooses to die on his own terms by running across a busy motorway.

Mr. Bones commits suicide because his designation as ‘companion’ makes it impossible for him to imagine that he could have an autonomous, valuable and independent life outside of the human-canine paradigm. His decision to die, of course, is made easier by the fact that he believes in a spiritual place called ‘Timbuktu’, where after death on Earth, man and dog can reunite. The appeal of reaching Timbuktu is manifold, but one benefit Mr. Bones cites is that in Timbuktu, dogs can speak the language of humans which, as discussed in Chapter One in regards to Stein’s Enzo, is often imagined to appeal to canine characters. Given the impossibility of this dream, and since it is the promise of reunion with his human counterpart that most appeals to Mr. Bones, the reader is left wondering whether there is ever

any possibility of a rich and pleasurable life for Mr. Bones outside of his role as this man's best friend.

Lending equal weight and importance to the human and canine experiences of social alienation makes Auster's novel unique because the main narrative arc does not overtly privilege the human journey over the canine one. Only if *Timbuktu* is read from a human-centric perspective is Mr. Bones' usefulness as a resource for Auster's engagement with this anthropocentric focus potentially reductive. There is no doubt as to the many ways Mr. Bones as a character acts as a resource useful in the telling of Willy's story but, as already shown, this novel differs from typical dog narratives in the way it represents the canine experience as equally valid as the human's journey. Indeed, Auster employs numerous effective techniques in order to ensure the reader recognises that dogs, with or without a human guardian to care for them, live rich emotional lives filled with valid experiences. While the life may be one filled with struggles and hardships, as is the case with Mr. Bones, it is a legitimate existence, nonetheless.

Through the exposition of complex thoughts and the revelation of dreams and desires Mr. Bones transcends his restriction to a social role and emerges as a multi-faceted canine character. One way this is achieved, using a technique obviously different from that used in Koontz's novel, is that *Timbuktu* is told from the canine protagonist's perspective. Structuring the narrative in this way encourages the reader to adopt Mr. Bones' point of view and thus identify with him as he endures life without Willy. Experiencing the world from the dog's perspective evokes an intimacy in the narrative and leads to a deeper understanding of the gravity of Mr. Bones' predicament. The reader shares the dog's experiences as they witness the many perils he faces as a free roaming stray dog. Auster evokes a sense of pathos through the reader's recognition that Mr. Bones is acutely aware of this dreadful fate that awaits him

should he be captured. *Timbaktu* is a creative imagining of how an actual dog might feel about, and deal with, the fears, desires and motivations that might arise if put in a similar circumstance. Of course, how a dog would actually feel can never be known, but Auster effectively speculates how a dog who has only even known a life amongst humans might be driven to avoid death and danger, and long to find another human to care for him.

Telling the story from the canine protagonist's perspective means that Auster is able to have Mr. Bones express his complex thoughts and sensations. The effectiveness of this technique can be seen in the passage when Auster has Mr. Bones explain how being bred dependent upon humans makes him feel once he is left alone. Auster writes: "He was a dog built for companionship, for the give-and-take life with others, and he needed to be touched and spoken to, to be part of a world that included more than just himself" (140). Mr. Bones' awareness of his dependence upon humans, as a result of being bred a companion animal, shows not only that he is a self-reflective and emotionally complex individual, it emphasises the pitfalls of this designation. "He had grown into a soft, civilized creature, a thinking dog instead of an athletic dog," he laments, "and as far back as he could remember his bodily needs had been taken care of by someone else" (Auster 88). When hunger sees him attempt to stalk and fell a 'stupid', plump, slow-moving pigeon but fail, he feels embarrassed and is left to scavenge garbage scraps (92). Mr. Bones' experience of shame reveals him to be not merely a literary convenience, but an emotionally intelligent, sensitive and fragile natured canine character in his own right.

It is the itinerancy trope – previously discussed in relation to Lassie and Timoleon Vieta in Chapter Two – that ultimately extends subjectivity to Mr. Bones and undermines his limiting cultural classification. After Willy's death on a suburban sidewalk, the arrival of the police prompts Mr. Bones to flee to avoid capture. Thereafter, his journey is itinerant as he

first encounters a group of cruel boys at a park, then Henry Chow, whom he has to leave because of Henry's violent father; finally he spends some time with the bourgeois Jones family. Like Lassie and Timoleon Vieta, Mr. Bones is given various names such as 'Cal' and then 'Sparky'. Laura Brown explains that the aim of the itinerancy trope is ultimately anthropocentric as the dog's transition from person to person serves to "assert the diversity of human experience" (133). While this is certainly true in many cases, novels like Auster's suggest this anthropocentrism is not inevitable, because in such texts, the dogs' itinerancy also functions as a reminder that animals bred for the purposes of providing companionship to humans are not defined by this human-relegated role. Beyond the label, there exists a dog, not bound to a human assigned designation, but rather who inhabits a unique canine identity.

Within the world of the novel, no one observes or acknowledges Mr. Bones' immediate and desperate search for food, water and shelter. Although he goes unnoticed as he wanders the streets in search of food and laps up "the warm, grayish water" from puddles (Auster 86), Auster provides a detailed account of these experiences. No one observes his joy at finding "an ice cream cone melting on the sidewalk" or watches as he scavenges "the remnants of a Kentucky Fried Chicken dinner someone had left on a park bench" (92, 93), yet Auster still describes these experiences in vivid detail. Auster even goes as far as to document the dog's capitulatory request for death. He writes:

[Mr. Bones] rolled onto his back and spread his legs wide open – exposing his throat, belly and genitals to the sky. He was utterly vulnerable to attack in that position. Splayed out in puppylike innocence, he waited for God to strike him dead, fully prepared to offer himself up as a sacrifice now that his master was gone. (94)

It seems that not even God is watching as his request for death at this time is denied. Shortly after, in the moments before his suicide on the highway, he waits in vain by the side of the

road hoping that someone driving by might stop and pick him up. Instead, he attracts a new label and becomes just another “sick and crazy old dog” wandering on the motorway (180), but he is certainly not just a sick and crazy dog to the reader who having witnessed his harrowing journey feels empathy for him and invests in a happy ending for this individual at the conclusion of an arduous and harrowing journey. Most of Mr. Bones’ experiences take place unseen or unacknowledged by the humans around him; yet, it is by documenting these events in detail that Auster shows that animal experiences do not require the observation or validation of humans in order to matter or exist.

In contrast to Mr. Bones’ suicide in *Timbuktu*, whereby the dog is likely neither missed nor mourned, there are multiple witnesses to the murder of the canine protagonist in Jack Ketchum’s novel *Red* and at least one man is left deeply aggrieved. Like in Koontz’s and Auster’s novels, Red’s murder at the hands of teenager Daniel McCormack enables Ketchum to develop a human-centric narrative involving Avery Ludlow’s reconnection with his estranged family and explore issues relating to social justice. It soon becomes clear that Avery’s response to his dog’s killing is not just a reaction to the event itself but rather relates to all the psychological meanings rising up from Avery’s past that have become attached to it. In this regard, Ketchum clearly utilises Red as a character to facilitate Avery’s reconnection with his family and the wider community.

The extent to which Red’s murder facilitates Ketchum’s human-focussed interests in the narrative becomes evident when the true motivation for Avery’s search for justice emerges. At first, it seems that Avery seeks justice for his dog’s murder because the act was cruel and wanton. However, on closer inspection, it seems that to a large degree, Avery’s need for justice stems more specifically from his outstanding issues with his son Billy. His reaction to Red’s death is rooted in unresolved grief and anger over Billy having murdered

Mary and Tim. The novel suggests this by implicitly linking Red's murder and the deaths of Avery's family members in various ways: for example, the similarities in age and the shared tendencies towards antisocial and criminal conduct that exist between Billy and Red's killer, Daniel; and the fact that Avery's family, like the McCormack family, has "a whole lot of bad troubles in it" because of young boys with profound "problems" (Ketchum 137).

Furthermore, Avery's quest for justice has much to do with his need to punish Daniel because Daniel reminds him of Billy. Billy is described as a troubled boy who would lie, steal, who dropped out of school and could not retain a job. The Navy officially discharges him for mental instability. On the fateful night, while Avery and Alice are out, Billy, aged 24 years at the time, asks Mary for money and when she refuses he beats her and leaves. He returns to douse his sleeping brother, Tim, and his unconscious mother in petrol and sets the house on fire. Tim dies in the fire and Mary dies in hospital five days later. Ketchum invites the reader to connect Billy's acts of familial homicide and Daniel's act of animal cruelty when it transpires that justice for Avery constitutes no more than an admission of guilt and apology, which despite coming from Daniel, might substitute for the admission and apology Avery never got from Billy. The importance of gaining an apology is clear when Carrie Donnel asks Avery what became of Billy. Avery explains that Billy blamed the murders on another boy: "I said I'd stand by him even after what he did if he'd just admit it and stop his damn lying and tell my *why* he did it, why he had to go and kill them" (97 original emphasis). Read in this way, the literary function of the dog in this novel is revealed: Red's death is the catalyst to prompt Avery's revisiting of his family trauma, the resolution of his emotional and psychological pain and the reconnection with his fractured family.

In the world of the novel, Red, like Mr. Bones in *Timbuktu*, functions as a literary device to support a human-focused narrative and he fulfills a social role as a companion.

Avery Ludlow's wife Mary gives Red, a puppy at the time, to her husband on his 53rd birthday. After Mary's and Tim's murders, Avery – now aged 67 – is devastated and emotionally dependent on his dog who becomes a psychological prop. In other ways, however, Ketchum – just like Auster – gives Red a subjectivity that goes beyond his instrumental functions. The dog is characterised as possessing a canine identity and depicted as a valuable individual. After being shot and killed by Daniel McCormack, Red is also considered worthy of the justice his human guardian seeks for him.

Like Einstein in *Watchers* and Mr. Bones in *Timbuktu*, in Ketchum's novel, Red is the only friend to a socially isolated adult male. Even before Red's death, Avery suffers some loneliness and depression as a result of his social isolation. While he has some friendships with the likes of lawyer Sam Berry, his employee Bill Prine and local woman, Emma Siddons, Avery is socially withdrawn as a result of his family tragedy. His daughter Alice, who was not home and so was not physically harmed on the evening of Billy's killing spree, has since married and moved away. Avery avoids her for fear she will raise the issue of reconciliation with Billy. Avery's father, almost ninety years of age, resides in a nursing home and although Avery confides in him, the two seem estranged. No definitive reason exists for this estrangement but when Avery visits his father, their conversation ends with his father saying "Go on about your business son...Come see me again sometime before my birthday. You can be a worrisome difficult son of a bitch but I don't mind your company, not at all" (Ketchum 107). Thus, for various reasons, Avery has minimal contact with his surviving family and is distanced from friends, so without Red as a companion, he is effectively alone.

Ketchum's characterisation of Red as a feeling and knowing individual begins when Red acts autonomously to provide Avery after tragedy strikes his family. Avery struggles to

deal with his loss: “There were times after Mary and Tim’s deaths he’d drink himself to sleep” (Ketchum 105). However Red, who has “a clock in his belly unfixed to Ludlow’s sorrow” assists his human guardian’s recovery through his persistent attempts to rouse Avery in the mornings. He licks Avery’s face and makes it his habit to “burrow beneath the covers and with his cold wet nose seek out the back of Ludlow’s neck” (105). Even when Avery responds by striking Red, he persists. Ketchum writes, “The dog would not permit Ludlow his indulgences and self-pity...” (106). Despite struggling with severe depression, Avery finds pleasure in the activities he shares with Red, such as fishing and hiking. Thus, Red’s companionship compensates, at least in part, for Mary and Tim’s absence and the dog’s presence assists Avery to partially recover.

Avery’s memories of Red and the fact he was a source of support for his grieving human guardian provides insight into this dog’s unique personality. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Two, Red is remembered as being a dog who dreamed of chasing cats and rabbits or perhaps running alongside Mary or Tim. He has a rich inner life and exercises preferences and expresses motivations and desires. Avery’s attachment to Red and perception of him as a worthy individual are strong. Avery’s desire for justice after his dog’s murder is, as previously shown, certainly linked to his desire for justice for his wife and son but, in addition to this, Avery seeks justice for Red because he genuinely believes the dog deserves it. Ketchum goes to great lengths to depict Red as a sensitive social being whose murder is worthy of attention. By assigning Red such intrinsic value, Ketchum validates animal cruelty as a serious social issue connected to human antisocial behaviour that places not only nonhuman animals but also society in danger. In addition to this, he also demonstrates that literature, and in particular fiction, are useful and valuable media for exploring issues about animals and human-animal relations. By various means, Ketchum encourages the reader to view Red as having inherent value and he emphasises that to Avery, the dog is a unique and

worthy being. In this way, like Auster in *Timbuktu*, Ketchum produces a paradox whereby he uses the companion animal, in this case not to explore human social exclusion, but to facilitate a resolution to Avery's family drama and initiate a reunion with his daughter and her family. Yet he also aims to ensure the dog is not *just* a device but rather a worthy being in his own right.

In all three novels discussed above, then, dogs perform in various ways that provide companionship to lonely individuals as well as functioning to support the anthropocentric narrative; in *Timbuktu* and *Red*, however, this does not occur at the expense of representing dogs as developed and detailed individuals. In Wroblewski's bildungsroman, *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, something different again happens: here, the dogs are obviously narrative devices and the details of their instrumentalisation as companions are laid bare.

Wroblewski's novel is widely recognised as a contemporary revisiting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In her 2014 essay, 'An Onomastic Approach to *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*: David Wroblewski's Transformation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*', Marie Nelson examines the significance of character names in Wroblewski's novel. She argues that names "guide the reader from the beginning to the end... [and] whether the source being drawn upon is Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or Kipling's *Jungle Books*, the Sawtelle dogs are presented as having as fully developed personalities as human beings" (29-30). Annette Krizanich argues, "Wroblewski's novel utilizes parallels with *Hamlet* to depict a world in which animals can be morally superior to humans, in order to subvert the ideology of human exceptionalism" (90). Krizanich suggests that the Sawtelle dogs Almondine and Essay represent Shakespearian characters Ophelia and Horatio respectively, and the stray dog named Forte, who lives in the

woods, represents Fortinbras (92-3). When read in this way, the novel's implementation of the canine characters as literary devices is clearly apparent.¹⁸

Like *Watchers* and *Red*, Wroblewski's novel is primarily about the life of a human being, in this case Edgar Sawtelle. Edgar is socially isolated owing to his muteness (as discussed in Chapter One), and because he is an only child living on a remote farm. He does attend school but there is no mention of any significant interpersonal relationships he has outside of his immediate family. So like Travis Cornell, Willy G. Christmas and Avery Ludlow in the previous novels, Edgar Sawtelle harbours a closer relationship with dogs than he does with the humans in his life and, furthermore, it can be argued that the dogs actually serve to replace human relationships. Edgar's preference for spending time with dogs over people stems largely from his ability to communicate with dogs using gestures. While all the canine characters in the novel assist with the telling of this human's story, it is Sawtelle dog Almondine who, like Einstein, Mr. Bones and Red, serves as a substitute for a human in her co-dependent interspecies relationship with Edgar.

Edgar and Almondine's relationship is described as if they are siblings, even twins. When Edgar is born and brought home, he is introduced to Almondine in much the same way one child is introduced to a newborn brother or sister. Holding Edgar swaddled in her arms, Trudy allows Almondine to approach and smell the baby, whispering "No licks" in her ear (Wroblewski 33). They interact throughout his infancy and childhood; they play games together in the hills and around the barn. They soon come to view each other as a missing part of themselves that when absent leaves them incomplete. Wroblewski writes:

¹⁸ In Krizanich's reading of the novel, the dogs' parallel to human characters from *Hamlet* is done as a means to an (uncharacteristically) animal-centric end. However, to what end they are used as literary devices does not detract from the fact that they are still functioning as devices.

Others dreamed of finding a person in the world whose soul was made in their mirror image, but [Almondine] and Edgar had been conceived nearly together, grown up together, and however strange it might be, she was his other. (457)

Almondine misses Edgar after he runs away from the farm taking three of the Sawtelle dogs along with him. As she is not with him when he flees, she is left behind to wander around the farm looking for her “essence”, her “soul” (463). Working against the premise that dogs do not have souls (see Chapter One), Almondine is humanised in the novel through her characterisation as Edgar’s soul mate. She is his sibling because he has no human sibling, his spiritual counterpart because he needs one: and in this sense, like Einstein, Mr. Bones and Red, she appears to be a psychological prop.

However, in a way similar to Ketchum’s and Auster’s characterisation respectively of Red and Mr. Bones, Wroblewski’s depiction of Almondine moves her beyond functioning as a mere pseudo sibling or psychological prop. To begin with, two of the chapters in the novel are written from her point of view. While speaking for dogs, as I have acknowledged previously, might not be an accurate representation of canine consciousness, as with Stein in *The Art of Racing in the Rain* and Auster in *Timbuktu*, Wroblewski nevertheless tries to find ways to imagine himself into Almondine’s mind. This is evident in the passage where she meets Edgar for the first time, as described and discussed in Chapter One. It is, however, Edgar’s musings about Almondine while on the run that provides the most vivid account of this dog’s unique and complex character. Upon planning his return to the farm after his sabbatical in the woods, Edgar looks forward to reuniting with Almondine. He reminisces about how “she liked peanut butter but not peanuts; how she preferred lima beans to corn but refused peas; how, best of all, she adored honey, any way she could get it, licked from his fingers, licked from his lips, dabbed on her nose. How she liked to snatch things from his

hands and let him take them back” (Wroblewski 471). In being given detailed and intricate preferences and desires, like those given to Red and Hobbes (see Chapter Two), Almondine becomes the subject-of-a-life. In this way, Wroblewski presents Almondine as being as apt a soul mate and sibling as a human brother or sister or friend would be. The surrogacy trope, then, in this case, actually offers a challenge to anthropocentrism and the deficiency hypothesis. This human-canine interspecies relationship is not trivialised or presented as an inappropriate or inadequate relationship and this particular dog is characterised as an intelligent and discerning individual.

Significantly, Almondine differs from the rest of the Sawtelle dogs because she is not for sale and is treated as a direct member of the Sawtelle family member. The other dogs however are products fashioned into marketable commodities, or ‘companions’. It is through Wroblewski’s meticulous outlining of the process involved in breeding and training dogs to perform as ‘companions’ that the depth of instrumentalisation behind this ubiquitously designated social role is revealed.

Sawtelle dogs are selectively bred and are highly regimented through rigorous training practices in order to become “*Canis posterus* – the ‘next dogs’” as Gar Sawtelle calls them, which in the novel correlates to the ‘ideal’ canine companions (Wroblewski 176). The Sawtelle family has been breeding dogs for three generations, ever since Edgar’s grandfather, John, bought land upon which he established the Sawtelle farm and dog kennels. John’s interest in breeding dogs begins as a hobby, when he trades his own dog’s pups with pups bred locally. As John’s hobby develops, Wroblewski writes he “converted the giant barn into a kennel...[and] honed his gift for breeding dogs, dogs so unlike the shepherds and hounds and retrievers and sled dogs he used as foundation stock they simply became known as Sawtelle dogs” (19). The breed is created by John Sawtelle’s introduction of dogs with traits

that he admires into the bloodline, especially particular kinds of intelligence. For example, he trades a pup born to his own canine companion, Violet, for a pup sired by a local dog named Captain. While Captain's physical appearance appeals to John, he is more interested in the fact there is "something about his eyes – the way the dog met his gaze" (11). Since what captures John's attention is Captain's sociability, the way he "trotted around greeting the patrons" in a local bar, and the fact that when ordered to greet John, Captain "lifted a paw to shake" (11), it seems John equates canine intelligence with attentiveness to humans and obedience. John Sawtelle's search for apparently intelligent dogs is again evident in the passage where he requests that the pup Captain's guardian, Billy, chooses to trade with him should be the "*smartest* pup" from the litter (14 original emphasis). So while aesthetics is important, it is something "less tangible" (11) that John seeks as the defining trait of his unique canine creation. As a result, the 'Sawtelle dog' is a highly regarded and much sought-after breed.

Wroblewski goes on to outline the degree unto which the Sawtelle dogs are genetically and behaviourally manipulated in order to become so-called '*Canis posterus*'. In addition to intelligence, the Sawtelle dogs are bred for loyalty and devotion. Margo DeMello, discussing the story of Odysseus and his faithful dog Argos, points out that the dog who waits for his or her master "represents two of the qualities that we most associate with dogs: loyalty and waiting" (8). Before Trudy and Gar inherit the farm, it is said that John Sawtelle sought out dogs showing high levels of loyalty and devotion to their human 'master'.¹⁹ One such dog features in some letters that Edgar finds long after his grandfather's death, sent to John from a man named Charles Adwin, who shares the story of Hachiko, a dog in Tokyo whose tale

¹⁹ The term 'master' in reference to a dog's human guardian is a ubiquitous term. It should be noted that this term explicitly reveals the human-companion animal relationship to be one based on power inequality. The term is used uncritically in *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, *Watchers*, *The Dogs of Babel*, *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, *Timoleon Vieta Come Home- A Sentimental Journey and Timbuktu*.

resembles Homer's story about Argos in *Odyssey*.²⁰ Like Argos, a loyal dog who for a decade "awaits his master's return from battle" (DeMello 8), Hachiko waits daily for his 'master' Professor Ueno at the Shibuya train station even though Ueno died three years prior. Charles writes that he suspects Hachiko knew Ueno was dead; yet, still he returns to the station until his own death. Hachiko's devotion to his 'master' is so admirable that a monument is erected in Japan in his honour. John Sawtelle is also impressed by Hachiko's devotion and in a written response he requests that Charles locate the dog's breeder and obtain a pup for him.

To serve as 'ideal' companions, Sawtelle dogs are selectively bred to be smart and loyal but it seems good genetics are not enough as extensive training is also required to complete the process. Sawtelle dogs are taught to be obedient by enduring a strict daily training regime virtually from birth until the dogs are placed in new homes aged eighteen months. As pups, they are taught to obey numerous commands including, but not limited to "hurdles", "retrieves", "stays", "balance work", "bite-and-hold exercises" (Wroblewski 22), "come-fors" (119), "long-distance downs", "standing stay[s]", (121) "guided fetches" (421), "crazywalking", "releases" and "shared gaze drills" (180). The expectation placed on trained dogs is high. Wroblewski writes: "From the time they were pups, Sawtelle dogs learned that *stay* meant remaining not just still but quiet..." (87 original emphasis). Furthermore, the dogs are 'proofed', which means taught to tolerate and respond 'appropriately' to unexpected or stress-inducing stimuli (92-3). Hence, notwithstanding their supposedly superior genetics, the Sawtelle dogs' training schedule is protracted, exhaustive and highly complex.

²⁰ Hachiko's story is told in the 2004 children's book, *Hachiko Waits*, by Lesléa Newman. Yet another significant example of the 'faithful dog' story is the legend of Skye terrier, Greyfriars Bobby. He is deemed to be "Scotland's most famous dog" and "the most faithful dog in the world" because he "kept vigil at his master's grave for fourteen long years" until his own death in 1872 (Bondeson 7).

The Sawtelle dogs epitomise the extent unto which domesticated dogs are created and conditioned to fulfil the role of companion in the Western world. They resemble Paul Sheperd's description of the contemporary domestic pet: highly genetically manipulated "monsters of the order invented by Frankenstein...engineered to conform to our wishes" (553). They are "biological slaves who cringe and fawn or perform whatever we wish...embodiments of trust, dependence, companionship, aesthetic beauty, vicarious power, innocence, or action by command... they are organic machines conforming to our needs" (Sheperd 553). Yet, like Auster and Ketchum, Wroblewski complicates this act of strict design and accompanying social designation by drawing his readers' attention to ideas about captivity and freedom, control and choice. In raising questions about the capacity of dogs to make choices and demonstrating the possible outcomes when given the opportunity to choose how they live their own lives, Wroblewski invites the reader to consider the legitimacy of producing dogs to serve as contrived and controlled, commoditised providers of companionship. It is through the characterisation of two particular dogs in the novel, Forte and Essay, Wroblewski most obviously makes his inquiry into the ways that humans create and control domesticated dogs.

Forte challenges ideas about dog's willingness to submit to human dominion by rejecting the offer of domestication. He is not a Sawtelle dog but he is a pedigree German shepherd aged about one year who is suspicious of humans after living in the woods surrounding the Sawtelle farm for some time. His status as a stray is apparent owing to his emaciation and the fact he eats gravel to quell his hunger. It is his hunger that makes him vulnerable to humans as demonstrated when Gar and Edgar repeatedly attempt to lure him using food. For example, Gar is said to have "produced a plastic bag" from which he "shook out dinner scraps" (Wroblewski 71) and later Gar and Edgar leave out a bowl of kibble tethered to a tree (75). Edgar keeps the bowl regularly topped up and, eventually, having

earned Forte's trust, Wroblewski writes that the dog "ate the kibble from Edgar's hand" (90). Edgar is keen to capture and domesticate Forte so that he might be brought "into the line" (80), meaning bred into the bloodline to improve the quality of the Sawtelle pedigree. If captured and used in this way, Forte would relinquish his freedom, subjugate to human control and be used to manufacture 'ideal' canine companions alongside the other Sawtelle breeding dogs.

Forte, whose name "comes from the Latin root 'fortitude' and is associated with resolute endurance" (Nelson 26), so just happens to mean strong, resists submission to domestication despite accepting food from Edgar's hand and allowing Edgar to stroke and groom him. Armbruster states that in the dog narrative, "the classic formula requires dogs to suppress or abandon their wild or natural aspects and subjugate their own interests to those of human culture" (354). Yet unlike the Sawtelle dogs, who are born into captivity and are bred to be loyal and obedient companions, Forte does not suppress his own interests and continually *chooses* to return alone to live in the woods. Despite Forte's resistance, Edgar is eager to possess him; however, Gar extends subjectivity and autonomy to the dog when he says the decision to join them must be left to the dog. By emphasising Forte's rejection of domestication – which also signifies his resistance to becoming a means to improve the Sawtelle pedigree – Wroblewski questions what freedom for a dog really means and invites the reader to reflect on how much freedom domesticated dogs actually do or should have. The kind of freedom, one presumes, that would include the option to reject a human-designated social role, and freedom to mate with whom he chooses, rather than having breeding partners chosen for him through the process of selective breeding.

Despite all efforts, Forte resists joining the Satwelles and the highly commoditised dogs on the farm. Sawtelle dog, Essay, also called "the wild one, and the leader" in the novel

(Wroblewski 107) is the dog whose journey from captivity to freedom resonates most prominently in the narrative. After Edgar causes the accidental death of veterinarian and family friend Doctor Papineau, he flees the farm with the litter of seven dogs he raised; however, four of them cannot cross the river and so return to the farm. Three dogs, Baboo, Tinder and Essay remain with him as he spends an extended period living in the wilderness. One night while camping in the woods together, Edgar and Essay are sitting by the fire cooking fish when Forte appears. Not wanting Essay to rise from her position, Edgar “ask[s] her to stay with the pressure of his hand” (455). Wroblewski writes, “It wasn’t a command. He felt he hadn’t the right anymore...” (455). Considering that Edgar has not previously hesitated to command the dogs, his recognition that Essay has her own desires leads him to decide he can no longer control her. This passage in the novel questions human control over dogs that is largely achieved through training, which was previously presented in the novel as a necessary exercise to forge these dogs into desirable commodities. Edgar comes to realise training directly conflicts with allowing dogs freedom of choice, which he comes to recognise is something they deserve.

Wroblewski has his primary protagonist Edgar question the way in which humans breed and control dogs in order to have them fulfil a particular function. He overtly questions his right to command them. Edgar’s realisation that the Sawtelle dogs – despite having been created to serve an anthropocentric purpose– should be given the choice to act and live as they wish arises again in the narrative’s climactic event. When Edgar returns to the farm to confront his uncle Claude over Gar’s suspicious murder, a barn fire breaks out during which all the kennelled dogs are set free for their own safety. As Essay, the ever-faithful disciple, attempts to follow Edgar into the barn, Wroblewski writes, “He took her ruff in his hands to shake her down, scare her away, then stopped himself. They were done with commands” (534). Once again, the reader is reminded that Edgar’s view of controlling these dogs has

evolved. He has come to consider that commanding the dogs is improper as it impinges on their rights to choose how they wish to act and respond in a given situation. He recognises they are more than just commodities. More importantly, this moment signals Essay's transition from a dog who was bred to serve humans in a social role to a dog who is being freed from her role as a companion.

Perhaps as a result of her relationship with Forte, or conceivably acting upon her volition, Essay's final choice is to reject being a subjugated and dependent canine companion. It is with her decision to leave the Sawtelles and the Sawtelle farm along with her four remaining littermates, as well as two additional pups, that Wroblewski chooses to end his novel. She and her new pack depart the farm and cross over into the forest where Forte, "the missing link that will take [Essay's] offspring safely beyond human plotting" (Copeland 358), awaits them. Leaving their lives of domestication, captivity, conditioning and forced breeding behind, Essay and her pack choose freedom over living alongside humans. Wroblewski ends his novel with the sentence: "Essay stepped into the grass...She looked behind her one last time, into the forest and along the way they'd come, and when she was sure all of them were together now and no others would appear, she turned and made her choice and began to cross" (562). Wroblewski leaves the details of Essay's 'choice' ambiguous, but perhaps the 'grass' in this passage is not merely foliage underfoot – or perhaps underpaw – but representative of a preferable existence on the far side of the dividing line between domestication and freedom. Freed of humans' expectations of them, and given the freedom from providing companionship, they truly achieve liberation in this novel. They reject living as captives and refuse to be commodities on the Sawtelles' dog-breeding farm.

For as long as dogs have been cohabiting with humans they have appeared prolifically in cultural narratives. In this capacity, they are widely represented in accordance with the

roles they perform and as defined within certain categories. Categorising animals serves to bracket them together under a label that prevents us from viewing them as unique individuals rather than as generic members of a particular group (Taylor 60). Even on the most basic level, the category of ‘animal’, widely used to differentiate humans from other species, is “the product of a social construction” which, Taylor suggests, arises from humans’ need to classify and compartmentalise other animals, to attach meanings to them and give them identities, perhaps to “make sense of them” (Taylor 59). Yet, the labels nonhuman animals such as dogs tend to attract defines them in terms of their usefulness to humankind. Thinking about nonhuman animals in terms of their utility, and ascribing titles to them that reinforce their culturally ascribed roles, denies the animal inherent or intrinsic worth and suggests that their only value exists in relation to their value to us.

Dog narratives are a particularly useful medium for exploring the meanings that are ascribed to dogs through the relegation of the various labels and social roles they are given. Many dog narratives, including *Watchers*, *Timbuktu*, *Red*, and *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, in various ways and to varying degrees, represent dogs as being a means to an anthropocentric end. In *Watchers*, Einstein unites two lonely individuals, provides Travis with companionship and fulfils this depressed man’s need to be needed. Details of Einstein’s personal and traumatic journey are clearly supplementary to the narrative arcs involving the two main human characters: Travis and Nora. Any expressions of his canine desires become secondary as a result of Koontz’s attempts to humanise or anthropomorphise him. His death is feared only inasmuch as it would constitute a loss for science and humankind. While Einstein’s desire for a canine companion has the potential to represent him as being an emotional subject with intimate needs, the opportunity is immediately superseded by Travis’ scheme to breed Einstein, which, once again, relegates the dog to serve as a commodity in his capacity to replicate similarly idealised dogs through controlled reproduction.

Auster's Mr. Bones is undoubtedly a useful tool for the exploration of human social exclusion in *Timbuktu* and similarly in *Red*, Ketchum utilises the death of his canine protagonist to facilitate an emotionally fractured man's reunion with his estranged family. Both dogs are surrogates who provide their respective human guardians with companionship and emotional support. Wroblewski's dogs are also devices in numerous ways; as substitutes for Shakespearean characters, which enables Wroblewski to reinterpret the famous tragedy *Hamlet* in a contemporary format, and in the case of Almondine, as a substitute sibling to Edgar who is a socially and geographically isolated boy. Most notably, they reflect the depth of instrumentalisation inherent to the companion role through in their depiction as 'designer dogs', through their extensive fashioning into commodities for sale to people who seek to adopt them: through their regimental conditioning designed to ensure they become intelligent, loyal, devoted and obedient canine companions.

Yet, while the dogs in each of these dog narratives serves a human-centric purpose in at least two ways, the authors of *Timbuktu*, *Red*, and *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* also elevate their canine protagonists from performing merely as narrative tools and represent them as being complex three-dimensional characters. This is achieved by extending to these dogs certain forms of subjectivity, and by presenting them as having complex motivations and desires. Mr. Bones remedies Willy's loneliness yet Auster also shines a light on the loneliness felt by the dependent dog suddenly thrust into the unfamiliar realm of independence when he becomes an urban stray. Mr. Bones has desires, such as to find food, water, shelter and a human companion to care to him. He is motivated to avoid capture and probable extermination and he expresses complex emotional experiences such feelings of fear, shame, hope and eventually hopelessness. Mr. Bones does not cease to exist after Willy's death. Furthermore, his experiences of life are not less intense or diminished in any way. Indeed, by telling the tale using Mr. Bones' point of view, and dedicating the majority of the novel to the

dog's itinerant journey, Auster produces a story about a dog whose life is brimming with profound and consequential experiences. Beyond his status as a 'companion', Mr. Bones emerges as a complex individual with a value outside of his value to others, evident in the reader's investment in his journey and a positive outcome.

Even after Ketchum's canine protagonist Red is shot and killed, Avery's memories of his dog and the fact these memories include subtle details, show Red to have possessed his own rich experiences, motivations and desires. Wroblewski's Almondine supersedes her role as a surrogate device when her personal likes, dislikes and characterological idiosyncrasies are outlined in detail. She is granted subjectivity in the chapters that explore the world and her experiences of the world from her canine perspective. When Sawtelle dog Essay escapes the oppression and control on the family farm and exercises agency by choosing to live in the woods with Forte, she, like him, rejects submitting to human dominion. In various ways, using assorted techniques, these narratives demonstrate that the dog's employment as a device or cultural categorisation as a 'companion' does not necessarily exist as mutually exclusive to the representation of a dog as a unique and complex living being in literature. In fact, as the novels produced by Auster, Ketchum and Wroblewski demonstrate, deploying a dog as a device can exist in symbiosis with an authentic, multilayered representation of the companion canine and the human-canine relationship, and in many ways, can serve to challenge our perception of dogs as simple, empty vessels who exist to fulfil anthropocentrically determined designations.

Conclusion

No literary representation of a dog can offer an accurate representation of the canine mind because the canine mind is unknowable to anyone but a dog and because as human observers, our attempts to represent the canine experience will always involve some degree of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism. However, as stated in the introduction of this thesis, what is most important about the examination of depictions of dogs in fiction is not whether these representations are accurate but rather what attitudes and assumptions they have the power to reveal. As shown throughout my examination of the nine novels I classify as dog narratives, a canine-centric analysis of fiction can reveal the various paradoxical ways we view dogs bred to provide us with companionship.

To begin with, it is clear that dogs exist somewhere in limbo between nature and culture, humanlike and ‘animalistic’, and in many significant ways they remain our ‘other’. An important point of difference still used to disenfranchise dogs in Western culture involves our reverence for human language and the assumption that language is something that humans possess and dogs lack. In *Watchers*, Dean Koontz epitomises reductive perspectives that presume dogs to be dumb and this assumption is clearly linked to pervasive and problematic Western cultural beliefs stemming from science, Judeo-Christian religion and Greek philosophy. Descartes’ claim that animals are machines and his belief that they are soulless and unintelligent beings remains influential to this day. The ability to speak words is still valorised over gestural forms of communication, even when gestures prove to be more – or certainly no less – effective. Koontz’s exaltation of Einstein, who is genetically engineered to produce language, results in the devaluation of ordinary dogs, whose communicative abilities, even when gesturally based, are by no means simplistic or ineffective. Travis Cornell suspects he is anthropomorphising Einstein and so makes a common mistake when

he dismisses the dog's behaviour as meaningless. This leads him erroneously to deny dogs the capacity for reason or the ability to practice deception. Indeed, Travis denies ordinary dogs the capacity for many complex intentions that in reality they possess.

Other dog narratives imagine that their canine characters covet humans' ability to speak using words and blame themselves for misunderstandings that arise during interspecies miscommunications. They often consider themselves to be voiceless or speechless, as is the case in Garth Stein's novel in which Enzo wants to reincarnate as a man so he can speak with a human voice. In this case, however, Stein uses structural irony to undermine Enzo's belief about the so-called exceptionalism of humans. The reader recognises that Enzo is not at fault in matters of interspecies miscommunication but the blame is often put on the dog and this leads to the dog being pathologised and corporeally punished. Stein makes a number of points about interspecies communication in his novel; but most importantly, he suggests humans lack insight and understanding into the nature of dogdom. Ironically, the times when communication occurs most fluently between dog and human in the novel are when gestures are used, which suggests that a dog's life is not less significant because he or she cannot speak using words.

Breaking through the perceived speech barrier is also focus of Carolyn Parkhurst's novel *The Dogs of Babel* but in this dog narrative, the author challenges and undermines the power and proficiency of human language as a means of communication when she exposes it as overrated as a means of communicating, particularly when resolving disputes. Parkhurst has her human protagonist, Paul, come to recognise that his dog Lorelei can and does participate in human language as a recipient, and in addition to that, she possesses a unique, complex and effective vocabulary of her own. Furthermore, this novel shows how language based forms of prejudice can lead to victimisation.

The possibilities of gesture-based interspecies communication is laid bare in Wroblewski's novel as Edgar, a mute boy, and his dog Almondine bond using only gestures. Indeed, the author portrays Edgar and Almondine as being able to communicate more effectively than any other two characters in the novel, even humans with other humans. Contrary to first impressions, this novel is not about silence but like Stein and Parkhurst's novels, it is concerned with exploring different kinds of voices. What is clear in all of these novels is that our ideas and assumptions about language and the ways we value different forms of language require ongoing interrogation. What these narratives can show us is that there is more than one kind of voice, that the languages of humans and other animals often overlap, and perhaps, the human definition of language is simply too narrow. What my examination of these novels demonstrates is that dog narratives concerned with issues relating to language and interspecies communication offer us the opportunity to reflect on, as well as question, the kinds of prejudices that humans impose on dogs.

The disenfranchisement of a nonhuman individual based on a perceived lack of a reasoning mind, consciousness, a soul or capacity for language is a common way that notions of human exceptionalism are reinforced. Lack is commonly cited as a justification to exclude other animals from the definition of personhood and categorise them as property or as things instead. Denying personhood to dogs facilitates their use, abuse and, too often, their killing. However, many dog narratives complicate the exclusion of dogs from personhood by representing them as possessing complex emotional traits more often associated with human beings. They often do this by exposing the paradoxical attitudes that exist in relation to the social status of dogs. Authors of dog narratives interested in exploring this paradox often include characters in their novels who embody the opposing views of dogs as objects or subjects and create tension and conflict between these factions. The suggestion that dogs better fit the category of property or object in many novels is challenged when the author

extends subjectivity by way of personal experience and a rich emotional life to the canine characters. Moreover, these dogs are portrayed as being cherished and valued unique individuals by the humans who care for them. In these cases, dog narratives challenge the claim that 'lack' should form the basis for exclusion from personhood but rather they suggest that inclusion and consideration should be offered to dogs upon the basis that they enjoy rich and complex emotional lives and possess inherent value, which means a value outside of their value to us.

In *Red*, *Julius Winsome*, *Timoleon Vieta* *Come Home: A Sentimental Journey* and *Dogs* our paradoxical perceptions of dogs as existing partly in the domain of property and partly in the realm of personhood are exposed. These authors, however, all challenge the idea that dogs are merely things or property by providing rich accounts of dogdom. This paradox in perception and social classification is represented in the novels by the division of individuals and communities into those who view dogs as objects and those who consider dogs to be persons or subjects. The consequences of attitudes that cast dogs as objects are dire as depicted in these novels for in every instance where this attitude exists dogs are killed as a direct result. The categorisation of dogs as objects arises in many corners of Western society such as in legal and hunting discourses as well as in our responses to dogs as perceived threats to us as individuals or to humanity in general.

In *Julius Winsome* and *Dogs*, breed stigmatisation is one form of prejudice that relies on the objectification, depersonalisation and demonisation of specific dog breeds such as the pit bull terrier. Indeed, what some of these novels suggests is that there is a direct link between the categorisation of dogs as objects or property and acts of violence being committed against them. Red, Hobbes, Timoleon Vieta and the many plague-infected dogs in Kress' novel are all killed by humans who deny them personhood and view them as valueless

‘things’. What the novels featured in Chapter Two also show us is that there is no such thing as trivial violence. They each aim to present the human-canine bond as a valid and significant relationship. Whether it is achieved through the exposition of memories of the deceased dog or via implementation of the itinerancy trope or through the mockery of the Lassie ending, these novels all suggest in unique ways that dogs do not require validation from us to be significant or need to fit the legal definition of persons to have the right to exist.

There is little doubt that dog narratives prove a valuable resource for examining our attitudes towards dogs kept as companions in Western culture. What they also provide is useful insight into the role of companion that is so ubiquitously given to dogs in the Western world. As I have argued, dogs fulfil many roles in life and literature and their fulfilment of these various roles highlights their adaptability as literary and literal devices. The use of dogs as narrative devices and literary depictions of dogs centring on their given role in human society are common in dog narratives. The employment of dogs as devices can be viewed as a reductive appropriation of the animal form just as the creation of dogs to serve in the role of companion to humans is noted by some to be just another form of nonhuman animal instrumentalisation. Yet, as illustrated in Chapter Three, using dogs as devices in fiction need not be limiting or limited because authors can represent canine characters as possessing depth of character and subjectivity. Canine characters often exist to assist with the telling of a human’s story, which in turn tends to result in them being depicted primarily as catalysts and surrogates, or as commoditised companions. Yet despite a novel’s primary anthropocentric focus, I have shown that dogs can appear in narratives in a capacity that does not render them necessarily secondary or subsidiary to the humans’ story.

Of course, not all dogs to appear in fiction transcend their more practical relegations, such is the case with Einstein in *Watchers*, but many authors of dog narratives can and do

represent their canine protagonists as having autonomous desires, motivations and complex emotional experiences. Auster and Wroblewski achieve this by telling the story, in whole or in part, from the dog's point of view. Canine characters such as Mr. Bones and Timoleon Vieta are shown to have experiences outside of the human gaze via the itinerancy trope. These dogs deal with inner conflict, their sense of loss and desperation and the representation of this psychological process occurs in no diminished capacity in the novels. Dogs like Red, Hobbes and Almondine are described in relation to their likes, dislikes, as well as being given personal idiosyncrasies. Wroblewski powerfully questions our idealised conception of the 'ideal' canine companion, which in his novel comprises intelligence, obedience and loyalty, and invites the reader to consider if this kind of dog bred as a device to provide companionship can exist in communion with allowing dogs to have freedom and exercise volition. In exploring concepts such as command and choice, captivity and freedom, Wroblewski allows some of the Sawtelle dogs to exceed their role as a literary device as well as their position as surrogate for Edgar. As a result, his novel also functions as a kind of coming-of-age story about humanity as it reflects on the legitimacy of breeding and training dogs as commoditised companions. In short, he invites us to question the nature of human control over companion dogs.

Examining depictions of nonhuman animals such as dogs in fiction is important because just as social attitudes influence these literary texts, dog narratives can affect and influence societal attitudes. From a canine-centric, Critical Animal Studies perspective, the dog must remain at the forefront of the analysis so that any prejudices and paradoxes in our thinking can be identified, discussed and potentially challenged. In the reading of fiction, at least, the accuracy of an animal representation is less important than determining the potential consequences of the ways in which we think about dogs as a result of the depiction. Clearly, while our first thought of dogs might relate to roles that they fulfil in our lives and in human

society and while dogs might in some ways remain more objectified than subjectified, more dependent than independent and are still perceived to be lacking in many ways, we seem to recognise that they possess a unique individuality that warrants their emancipation from the double bind that sees them misunderstood, diminished in capacity, objectified and instrumentalised in many facets of Western culture.

Dog narratives are important cultural narratives that make numerous significant contributions to our understanding of the human-canine relationship as well as help us to understand what the literary emphasis on animals can tell us about people. There are also other important reasons to read and critique dog narratives, such as to explore the ways in which authors experiment with dog characters, and narrators and even the literary form. They enable us to observe the ways that authors address ideas about human exceptionalism, language, narrative, perception and subjectivity. In these and other ways, authors of dog narratives can extend the role and function of the novel as a medium for expression in itself. The literary emphasis on dogs in dog narratives, it seems, tells us a great deal about our contradictory perceptions and paradoxical treatment of dogs. Perhaps, moving forward, they can offer us a way to re-evaluate and enhance our relationships with this extraordinary and captivating species.

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